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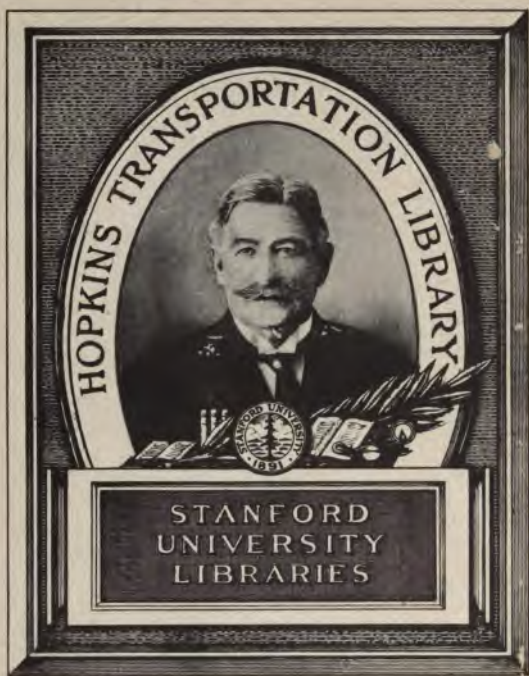
THE YOUNG CASCARILLERO



By
Marlton Downing

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The Tiger's Breath.

(See page 146.)

THE YOUNG CASCARILLERO

OR
CARLOS THOMAS'S ADVENTURES

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SIERRA DE LOS ANDES,
AND THE VALLEYS OF THE RIO DE LA PLATA

BY
HAROLD HODGSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WILLIAM H. HODGSON

NEW YORK: J. M. HARRIS, 1895.

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1895



THE YOUNG CASCARILLERO

AND

COLONEL THORNDIKE'S ADVENTURES

*A STORY OF BARK HUNTERS IN THE ECUADOR FORESTS,
AND THE EXPERIENCES OF A GLOBE TROTTER*

BY

MARLTON DOWNING

AND

HARRY W. FRENCH

ILLUSTRATED BY H. MARTIN BEAL AND HENRY SANDHAM

BOSTON

LOTHROP PUBLISHING COMPANY

1895

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TYPOGRAPHY BY C. J. PETERS & SON,
BOSTON, U.S.A.

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THE YOUNG CASCARILLERO.

CHAPTER I.

THE WILDS OF ECUADOR.

THE snow-capped peak of Chimborazo reared its lofty head until the summit was lost in the clouds. To the westward, the river Guayaquil, fed by the torrents of the Cordilleras, flowed rapidly down to the sea, there to be swallowed up by the tranquil waters of the vast Pacific.

Some two miles from the bank of the turbulent stream, and headed towards the rising country, a picturesque cavalcade slowly wound its way over a rough and tortuous path. The characters who made up the party were of many tribes and people. The South American

Indian and the native Ecuadorian predominated, although a goodly number of Peruvians were in the company.

These latter were lighter skinned, had more powerful frames, showed greater neatness in dress, and their bearing indicated a higher degree of intellect, than the majority of their companions.

Near the head of the procession, mounted upon mules, rode two men, and a boy of about sixteen years.

A glance would reveal that not one of this trio could claim South America as his birth-place.

They were unmistakably Anglo-Saxons.

The larger, though not the elder, of the two men was the leader of the expedition, as could readily be told by the air of command he maintained and the profound respect with which he was treated.

Lawrence Ashley was an Englishman. He was the agent of a London firm which had fitted out the present expedition to search

through the forests of Ecuador for that valuable commodity known as Cinchona, or Peruvian bark, from which quinine is made.

His white companions were American sailors, whose vessel had been wrecked on the coast of Ecuador, and who had made their way to the city of Guayaquil. There, not so much from necessity as choice, they had joined the bark hunters, or cascarilleros as they are termed.

"I say, Rob, this ornery beast that I'm astride of is as crank as a Geordy brig in a gale of wind. She'll not mind her helm, but just keeps ploughing along in the wake of that Dago ahead."

"If you take my advice, my friend," interrupted Mr. Ashley, "you'll allow the animal to continue to do so; for before we have crossed the mountains you will see that these little brutes know more of the dangerous paths which they have to tread than do their riders."

"That may be so, sir," returned the sailor with an expression of disgust; "but I don't

see why you put a man in charge of a dumb critter or a floating ship, if he hasn't got the power to control them."

The leader smiled at this outburst; but the boy Robert laughingly remarked, —

"O Tom, you'll get used to the mules before long; I will admit though that they do not ride as easy as a lady's palfrey."

"I don't know what you mean by a palfrey; but if it's anything more uncomfortable to sit on than the back of this chap is, I prefer to go afoot;" and Tom moved uneasily in his rude saddle.

The action of the sailor, as well as his remarks, which, albeit they were in English, were understood by most of the party, called forth expressions of extreme contempt from the natives who rode nearest to him; but a sharp look from the leader effectually checked further demonstration.

Mr. Ashley, however, began to feel a little uneasy; for this had not been the first time that his dusky followers had evinced dis-

pleasure at the presence of their white companions.

“They look upon the sailor and the boy as interlopers,” he thought; “and I fear that unless a strict watch is maintained upon their movements, they will endeavor to do my associates some bodily harm. But perhaps I am borrowing trouble needlessly. We will wait and see.”

The progress of the company was naturally slow, as by far the majority of the number were on foot, and the path had become steep and rugged; consequently, when night fell, they had by no means reached the highest altitude of their journey.

They halted in a little mountain village, when Mr. Ashley at once sought out the alcalde, or chief magistrate. He sought to obtain permission to remain in the town until morning. He also wished to secure his co-operation in procuring men with whom to continue the expedition; for a large number of those who had been employed on the coast to make this sec-

tion of the journey refused to go farther, fearing to meet the fierce tribes who inhabited the eastern slope of the mountains and the valleys beyond.

The mules could only be utilized to transport the supplies for another day, when their burdens must be transferred to the backs of natives; and it was these strong, athletic half-breeds that the experienced leader wished to obtain.

There was little difficulty in securing the services of a sufficient number of bearers, for the Englishman had the means to pay them well; so that on the morrow when the cavalcade started there were many strange faces in the party.

Six professional cascarilleros and an equal number of guides, who had been engaged in Guayaquil, still remained; and it was some of these former who diffused the leaven of discord which later on nearly proved fatal to the enterprise.

The start was made early, but no persuasion

of Mr. Ashley or Robert could induce Tom to again trust himself in the saddle.

"No, sir," he declared; "I feel safer walking on the feet that were given to me when I was born, than to rely upon four legs that any minute might fly up in the air and chuck me headlong over the cliffs." Don't be afear'd, Mr. Ashley, I'll keep up with the fleet; and if it should be that I drop a little astarn, I can easy enough follow in your wake, — that is, if these niggers don't have cruisers around that will cut a fellow off when he's parted with his consort."

"That is just what I am afraid of," replied Mr. Ashley. "We are entering a wild country, and our safety depends upon keeping together."

"Don't be afear'd, Cap'n. Don't be afear'd. Rely upon it, that Tom Bowlin will keep close in under the guns of the flag-ship."

So they proceeded, part of the guides and cascarilleros in the lead, and the remainder with the white men bringing up the rear, to prevent the bearers, who are arrant rogues, from desert-

ing with their valuable burdens, or the animals in their charge.

All that day Tom trudged along on foot ; and the following day his companions had to do likewise, for they had reached the spot where they were to abandon the mules. The expedition had now arrived in a section of the country where bark might be found.

They had crossed over the mountains, and, descending, reached a luxuriant growth of vegetation which could be seen extending before them in an unbroken stretch for miles and miles.

Still, the guides pushed steadily on, deeper and deeper into the wilderness, until, as night approached, Mr. Ashley called for a permanent halt, as this was to be the rendezvous and "store-station" from which the hunters were to radiate in search of bark.

For several days everybody was kept busy in building a large and substantial house of poles, with the roof thatched with long reeds, which were found growing in great profusion

on the banks of a stream about a mile distant.

Robert was anxious to accompany the hunters into the woods, but Mr. Ashley would not permit him. "No, no, my boy, not yet," he said. "Perhaps when you become more familiar with this wilderness you may go, but not now. At present I wish you and Tom to keep watch over our stores; for there is not one of these chaps that I would trust, save the guides. They are passably honest, for it is to their advantage to be so; but the cascarilleros and bearers would willingly rob us of everything we possess and leave us here to starve, while they laughed at our sad plight."

Nevertheless, the boy, with the wilfulness of youth, strolled away into the woods. He had caught sight of a gaudily plumaged bird, and, with gun in hand, sought to secure it.

Robert had not gone more than a hundred yards from camp when a favorable shot presented itself; but just as he was bringing the piece to his shoulder, he felt a sharp, stinging pain in his left arm.

Glancing quickly at the member, his dismay may be imagined at beholding the shaft of a tiny dart protruding from his shirt-sleeve, and the same instant he caught sight of a dusky form crouching in the underbrush.

Quick to act, the boy levelled his weapon at the would-be assassin and fired. At the report of the piece, an Indian sprang to his feet and darted away.

Then Robert's brain began to whirl, his vision dimmed, and he felt himself staggering to the earth, when he was caught in a pair of strong arms, and he heard the voice of Mr. Ashley as if afar off, saying,—

“Boy, boy, what has happened?”

The lad tried to articulate, but could not; instead, he relapsed into unconsciousness, so subtle and quick to act had been the poison upon the dart of the savage.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAPTURE OF CUTCH-LA-CO-LAS.

WHEN Mr. Ashley caught Robert in his arms, Tom Bowlin was close at his side, and having obtained sight of the fleeing savage, he sprang forward in pursuit, but he was quickly checked by a call from the leader.

“Stay, man! would you rush to your death? That Indian will lead you into an ambush before you have travelled a dozen rods.”

“But, Cap’n, he’s killed my young shipmate, and I would just like to get my hands on the beggar.”

“No, Tom, the boy is not dead, although the intention of his assailant was to that end. I can fetch him around all right, but we must hurry with him to the camp.”

“Then let me carry him, sir,” said the

kind-hearted sailor. "The little chap will be as light in my arms as an infant." And Tom, lifting the inanimate form with a tenderness scarcely to be expected from the rough, uncouth mariner, bore his burden to the hut.

Mr. Ashley cut open the sleeve of the lad's shirt and laid bare the tiny wound made by the dart. Without an instant's hesitation, the Englishman placed his lips upon the arm and began to draw forth what remained of the subtle poison. After the blood began to flow freely, he desisted, and then instructing Tom to open Robert's mouth, he procured a quantity of common table salt, and placed what might be a large spoonful upon the boy's tongue.

"What, Cap'n, do you want to kill the lad?" exclaimed the old sailor in consternation. "That's enough to strangle a man."

"Oh, no," replied the leader, "I am familiar with these wounds, and well know that salt in large doses is the surest antidote. Now a little water, and we'll see if he can swallow."

Tom, prompt to obey, procured a pannikin and rushing out of the house, filled the tin cup at a neighboring spring. Then returning with it to the side of his young friend, he poured a little between his pallid lips.

Both of the white men were overjoyed to see the throat of the sufferer move slightly.

"Ah, he's all right now," observed Mr. Ashley. "Some more salt, and we'll have him return to consciousness very soon."

"Then them things that the Indians shoot aren't sure death, are they, Cap'n?" asked Tom.

"No, indeed. They are not actually poisonous; but the material in which the points of the arrows are steeped possesses the property of producing a profound stupor, and an almost instantaneous paralysis of the entire system. In some cases the sudden action upon the heart will cause death, but such occurrences are rare. It is with these same darts that the Indian procures his food, and of course it would not do to poison the game."

"How do they fire the things?" inquired Tom, picking up the arrow which had struck his friend. "They aren't bigger than a school-boy's pencil."

Mr. Ashley smiled as he replied, "They blow them."

The expression on Tom's face as he gazed at his companion plainly indicated that he felt he was being made the subject of a jest.

"I am not joking," the Englishman hastened to add. "They blow these darts through reeds which vary in length from six to ten feet. The best of these singular guns are made by the natives from strips of wood grooved on the inside and firmly bound together."

As Mr. Ashley finished speaking, a great uproar was heard without. This had the effect of arousing Robert from his stupor, and he opened his eyes to find his two friends bending anxiously over him. Before he could utter a word, the doorway of the hut was darkened, and two of the guides entered, dragging between them an Indian whose naked body was bleeding from several wounds.

"Ah, whom have we here, Manuel?" asked Mr. Ashley of one of the men.

"Him that shot the boy, señor. We find him where he fall, very tired."

"Is he badly hurt?"

"No, but plenty bleed make him tired."

The kind-hearted Englishman, knowing that Robert was rapidly recovering, turned his attention to the native, and saw that the miserable creature's side and back were riddled with shot. The prisoner was trembling in every limb, as much from fright as pain and exhaustion. He fell upon his face at the feet of Mr. Ashley, and, in his own language, begged piteously for mercy.

Manuel, who could understand the fellow, spoke to the leader, "Him say, s'pose you no kill him, he be good man."

"Tell him we will decide what is to be done with him later on. At present humanity obliges us to look to his wounds."

It was a tedious and delicate operation which the chief had before him. For he attempted to

pick out, one by one, the numerous tiny leaden pellets which were imbedded, though not very deeply, in the Indian's flesh. The native bore the operation with the stoical fortitude peculiar to his race; yet several exclamations which escaped his lips — and were translated by Manuel — revealed that he felt he was undergoing a certain kind of punishment at the hands of the white man.

When the impromptu surgeon applied a cooling lotion to the laceration, and swathed the left arm and a portion of the body in bandages, the savage seemed greatly surprised. Apparently he realized for the first time that death from torture was not intended by his captors; an expression of gratitude replaced the sullen and evil looks which had previously settled upon his swarthy features.

While Mr. Ashley was busied with the Indian, Robert was slowly recovering from the first results of the poison which had so rapidly diffused itself through every vein and artery in his body; but before long a drowsiness stole

over his senses, and the boy dropped into a profound yet quiet slumber.

"Is that just right, Cap'n?" asked Tom, with apprehension in his tone, as he pointed to his young friend. "It don't look nateral to me."

"There is nothing to fear," said Mr. Ashley. "It is the lingering effects of the powerful narcotic; when he awakes the lad will be himself again."

Thus reassured, the sailor took from Manuel's hand the weapon which had discharged the shaft that wounded Robert. It was very light, about eight feet in length, with a bore that might allow a pea to roll through it.

Manuel observed the look of surprise, almost of contempt, which the mariner bestowed upon the singular gun; and reaching forward he regained possession of the tube, saying, "Him plenty bad; see!"

Then, without asking permission, the guide extracted a tiny arrow from a quiver which the Indian wore ingeniously plaited into his long

black hair, and inserted it into the weapon. Stepping to the door, and taking aim at a buzzard that had alighted on the limb of a decayed tree near by, Manuel blew a quick blast. There was a slight sound, and the bird unfolded its strong wings and took to flight.

"Ha, ha, Manuel! you'd go hungry if you had to depend on that thing to get your grub with," laughed Tom.

"No, no; look; him fall!" And the guide pointed triumphantly to the buzzard, which was fluttering and beating its pinions in the vain endeavor to sustain itself in air. Soon its struggles ceased altogether, and it fell to the ground like a stone.

"Live and learn! Live and learn!" muttered the sailor, slowly shaking his head. "When I was a boy I used to have something like that to bother the schoolmaster with, but I never expected to see one that would bring down a living creature at a cable's-length distance."

Before sunset Robert awoke and left his bunk. Although his arm was a little tender,



The guide pointed triumphantly to the buzzard.

and he felt somewhat shaky on his feet, yet he experienced no other inconvenience from the recent encounter with the savage. The captive Indian had been held a close prisoner, as Mr. Ashley wished to question him regarding the proximity of his tribe.

After supper had been despatched, Manuel was called into the hut.

"Ask him where his people are," said Mr. Ashley to the guide, as he pointed to the Indian; "and impress upon his mind that if he deceives us he shall not live to see the light of another day. Also assure him that I have plenty of men about me who are familiar with the wilds, and shall despatch them into the forest to verify his statement."

The interpreter made known the request of the leader, and the prisoner promptly answered. Although his words were intelligible only to Manuel, yet even the boy Robert comprehended his meaning by the gestures which accompanied his speech.

Holding up two fingers, the savage pointed

proudly to his blow-gun that was leaning against the wall, then taking a few short steps forward, he assumed a haughty and dignified bearing which indicated that there were two warriors.

Next his demeanor changed, his tall form seemed to shrink within itself, his gait became hesitating, his face took on an expression of fear and alarm, and he waved both hands about his lower limbs and again held up two fingers, to denote that two of the number were of the weaker sex and wore skirts.

"He tells us there are but four, two men and — two women," said the leader. "Am I right, Manuel?"

"Si, si, señor. And he says that his party were only a short distance away when we captured him, and they are now perhaps near by, waiting to see what we are going to do with him."

"Can we believe him?"

"He tell no lie, señor."

"That is good. We shall know how to act. Our force is so strong that I have little fear

of the wild men, yet if we gain their ill-will they will be able to greatly harass our movements. Tell him that he is free. And here," continued Mr. Ashley, taking from an open case a piece of gaudy-hued calico ten yards or so in length, "give him this as a token of friendship."

When Manuel transferred the cloth from the hand of the leader to that of the savage, the face of the latter lighted up with an expression of joy and surprise. Quickly folding it, the Indian walked to the doorway, where he paused.

"Why does he halt?" asked Mr. Ashley.
"What does he want?"

"I think I understand, sir," broke in Robert, who had been an interested spectator. "It is this; may I give it to him?" and the lad lifted the light yet formidable "blow-gun."

"Yes, let him have it; for it would certainly be cruel to turn an Indian adrift in the woods without the means of defending himself from the attack of an enemy, or providing himself with food."

When the released prisoner received the weapon from the boy he seemed greatly pleased. Gently laying his right hand upon the bandaged arm of Robert, he muttered a few words, then placing his bronzed palm upon his bare chest he uttered a loud, long yell, and bounding away, disappeared in the gloom of the forest.

When the savage was gone, Manuel observed, "White boy now Indian's friend. Indian, him fader. He now not be afraid."

CHAPTER III.

FOREWARNED OF TREACHERY.

FOUR weeks passed by after the little episode with the Indian, and nothing startling or unusual occurred in the camp of the cascarrilleros. That is, nothing which made itself apparent to the three white members of the expedition, or to Manuel and his brother guides who, as has been stated, were loyal to their employer.

But the leaven of discord had been slowly, though surely, working among the hunters and their more plebeian associates, the bearers. A goodly quantity of bark had been gathered and dried, and the ultimate result of the enterprise seemed most promising.

Upon Robert and the sailor devolved the duty of "curing" the cinchona, and packing

it into bunches or bales of forty pounds each. This was the weight for one man to carry upon his shoulders on their return over the mountains. Neither the boy nor Tom had been allowed to stray far from the store-house, for Mr. Ashley still maintained just fears for their personal safety. The dark looks cast upon them from time to time by their dusky companions had not wholly escaped the keen eyes of the leader.

One day, when the six cascarilleros and most of the bearers were away on a hunt which was to cover nearly a week, Robert obtained permission to make a little expedition into the woods; and armed with his rifle, and with the faithful Manuel for company, the lad strolled away.

There was little game to gladden the heart of the sportsman; but the novelty of the situation pleased the boy well, and he plunged on deeper and deeper into the forest.

At length the two, who were now firm friends, came out upon the bank of a little

stream, where, after slaking their thirst, Robert sat down to rest; but Manuel strode on farther to examine a tree, which he had seen in the distance, in the hope that it might be a cinchona bearer.

"You stay here. Don't go away. I come back soon," were the guide's instructions as he disappeared.

Some little time passed and Robert began to grow restless, fearing that an accident might have befallen his companion. He was about to venture in search of him when a slight rustling in the underbrush attracted his attention. Turning quickly, the boy peered into the thicket, but could see nothing.

"Some living creature must have made that noise," he thought. "I wonder what it could be? However, I am prepared;" and Robert rose to his feet, turned his back to the stream, and stood holding his weapon ready for instant use.

For a moment, perhaps, the lad remained thus silent; then the unmistakable sound of footsteps was heard approaching.

"Ah, there's Manuel now, and the noise in the brush must have been caused by some tiny animal hurrying to cover his hole." Scarcely had these thoughts chased each other through Robert's mind, when the sharp crack of a rifle echoed amid the trees of the forest, while an unearthly yell sounded from the branches overhead, as a large, tawny-skinned animal came darting from aloft and struck the ground within ten feet of where the boy stood.

A glance told Robert that he was face to face with a puma, or South American panther. The creature was not dead by any means, but for a moment lay rolling and snapping at a wound in its shoulder, then catching sight of the boy, it crouched ready to make the fatal spring.

So terrified at the sudden and unexpected peril was Robert, that the trusty weapon which he clutched tightly in his hand was as useless as one of the waving reeds that grew by the banks of the flowing stream.

"Manuel! Manuel!" he called in despair as he saw the animal leave the ground; unconsciously he closed his eyes, and that same instant he was borne to the earth, while he felt himself beneath a heavy and struggling weight. But quickly was the pressure upon his body relieved, and a second report reverberated through the forest.

With rapidly returning courage the lad opened his eyes and glanced about. There, close beside him, lay the panther writhing in its death agony, clawing and snapping at the grass and shrubs; at a little distance stood Manuel, still holding the smoking rifle; and near the guide was a sparsely clad Indian whose right hand grasped a long-bladed knife, while from every pore of his dusky body blood seemed to be flowing.

"Boy hurt?" asked Manuel with great anxiety, as he lifted the little fellow to his feet.

"No, no; but how did it all happen?"

"Me coming back, see puma ready to jump.

Me fire, he fall. Then see Injun come out of woods and cut with knife so, and so, and so," and the guide indicated the action of the native. "Then me get another chance, shoot again. Now panther dead."

"Who is the brave Indian?" asked Robert.

"Don't you know him? Him fellow with blow-gun."

So it was.

"See, he is wounded!" exclaimed the boy. "The sharp claws of the fierce animal have torn his flesh badly. We must assist him."

"Oh, he take care hisself," returned Manuel, not unkindly. "See, he know what to do."

For the Indian had already stepped into the water, and was bathing the lacerations upon his arms and chest. He was not injured so seriously as would be supposed after passing through a struggle with such a fierce and relentless opponent. The wounds were many, but not deep; for the puma had aimed his attack at the white boy, and not at the native.

When Robert found that his brave rescuer



There, close beside him, lay the panther.

was in no danger, his curiosity as to what had brought him into that neighborhood was aroused.

“Ask him, Manuel, by what good fortune he chanced to be here so opportunely?”

“Him already say. He wants talk with Señor Ashley.”

“What can it be? Perhaps he can show us where there is a good growth of bark.”

This question the guide propounded; but the Indian shook his head, and reiterated his desire to “have speech with the white chief.”

“Then take him at once to the camp,” said the boy, moving in that direction.

“No. He say he not go there. Want to talk with him in the woods. Afraid to meet bearers and cascarilleros.”

“But there are none at the store-house now, you know. Tell him that.”

When Manuel translated Robert’s speech, the Indian’s only answer was to spring lightly forward, leading the way in the direction of the rude buildings. Like a serpent the native

glided through the forest, and so swiftly that it was only with difficulty that the boy and Manuel could keep pace with him.

Upon reaching the edge of the clearing, the dusky leader of the little party halted and peered earnestly about; but there was nothing to excite alarm. Mr. Ashley was the only one in sight; and he was seated in the doorway of the cabin, deeply engrossed in a book.

The Indian, apparently satisfied that all was right, stepped aside, and motioned for Robert and Manuel to advance, which they did, he following close behind them.

The sound of footsteps caused the Englishman to look up quickly; and when he saw who it was that was drawing near, he arose and came forward to meet them. When his gaze fell upon the native he paused, and cast an inquiring look at Manuel.

"Cutch-la-co-las has come to have talk with Señor Ashley," answered the guide, calling the Indian by name.

"Ah, indeed! What can it be?" asked the

leader in Spanish. "Does he want presents for his women and warriors?"

"No, señor!" replied the native quickly, while he drew up his lithe form with conscious pride.

"Oh! You speak Spanish?" inquired Mr. Ashley in some surprise.

"Me speak little sometimes, señor."

"Then, why did you not use that language when you were our prisoner, and your life in danger?"

"When Cutch-la-co-las think him going to die, him forget white man's tongue and remember only his own."

Mr. Ashley smiled at this naïve confession, and could not help admitting to himself the force of the native's assertion. But without pursuing the subject further the leader said gravely, —

"Now that you are here, what is it that you have to tell me?"

Thus questioned, the Indian cast a hurried glance around, then laying a finger of his right

hand impressively on the shoulder of the white man, he began in a low voice, —

“One sun passed, Cutch-la-co-las was lying in the woods, and he hear the people of the white señor talk plenty. The words made the ear of the Indian ache, and his heart very sick; for he loves the great chief, and the boy,” casting a look at Robert who stood anxiously near by.

“What do you mean? What did they say?” questioned Mr. Ashley eagerly.

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARING FOR TROUBLE.

“THE cascarilleros are bad, plenty bad!” answered Cutch-la-co-las. “They say, when they come to camp they kill the white men, they kill the boy, they kill Manuel. Then they take the chief’s guns, take his stores, take his cloth, his beads, his powder, and his bark—make um rich, they say. Then they go far, far away, across the Cordilleras!”

“Great heavens! Is it possible?” exclaimed Mr. Ashley. “Yet the knaves are capable of such a crime! Nevertheless, my dusky friend, now that you have forewarned us, the villains will meet with a warm reception.”

“But the white chief and his friends are weak; the cascarilleros and the slaves are strong. Listen to what Cutch-la-co-las will do!”

“What?”

“He will bring his warriors, as many as there are leaves on the cinchona trees, and they shall lie hid upon the ground. Then, when the bad cascarilleros say ‘Strike,’ the voice of Cutch-la-co-las will be heard, and the lives of the white men shall be saved.”

“Will you do this for strangers?” asked the Englishman, much affected by the native’s proposal. “Your reward shall be great.”

“Cutch-la-co-las has not asked for presents. When he does he knows that the white man will give.

“Listen, when the moon shall come, the woods shall be full of Indians, but the cascarilleros will not see them until the voice of their chief calls them to battle. I go! Adios, señor!” And the noble savage wheeled abruptly, and darted swiftly away into the forest.

After the Indian had left, Mr. Ashley turned to his companions and asked,—

“What think you of this information?”

“Is it serious, sir?” eagerly inquired Robert,

whose knowledge of Spanish was as yet quite meagre.

"So much so, my boy, that it affects our lives and property. But, Manuel, how do you regard the Indian's honesty in this affair?"

"He speak truth, señor; for I hear little whisper, and was keep watch. S'pose you let Cutch-la-co-las kill the cascarilleros, then what we do? Don't get bark, don't get man to carry bundle. No, señor, let Indian help *catch* bad man, then give um plenty of the lash, *make* um good."

"Part of your advice is excellent," returned Mr. Ashley a little amused. "It shall be followed; but I draw the line at flogging, for I never yet knew a man to hold kindly feelings toward another who had subjected him to such punishment. Come, we have work before us to prepare for the coming crisis. We must remove everything of value to our own habitation, and look to our weapons, for we may be obliged to stand a siege."

When the three entered the hut they found

sailor Tom smoking, and hard at work netting a hammock from strong cord which some of the bearers had "laid up" of long, tough grass which grew in profusion in the marshy districts.

"Put that aside, my man," said Mr. Ashley. "We are threatened with an attack from our people, led by the treacherous cascarilleros, and must prepare to meet it."

"What's that you say, Cap'n? Going to pipe to quarters? Now, if we don't make them Dagos wish they'd changed their minds afore they were born, it's because powder won't burn and steel won't cut. Just tell me where's my station, and when ye order, 'Boarders, away!' if Tom Bowlin ain't the first to step his foot on the enemy's deck, it'll be because he's laid out on his own."

"Ah, Tom, if I had a dozen such fellows as you and Robert here to rely upon, I would not fear to meet a hundred cowardly cascarilleros."

"Don't mention it, Cap'n! The smaller the crew, the more glory, as I said when our first cutter captured a line-of-battle ship."

The white men worked carefully in strengthening their rude habitation, so as not to excite any suspicion in the minds of the few bearers who had been left in camp. But when the sun set, the Europeans found themselves behind four walls that would withstand quite a vigorous assault.

Our friends lighted their fire before the doorway as usual, and prepared supper as though nothing was likely to occur that would disturb their serenity.

But the sense of danger was on them; and Mr. Ashley said, "We are ready for them, but I feel a good deal as the cobra must whom I once saw treed in India."

"How was that, Mr. Ashley?" Robert remarked.

"Well, I'll tell you," Mr. Ashley rejoined, "or rather, I will tell you how the cobra was captured. It will help to pass our time;" and settling himself for his tale, Mr. Ashley began, —

"It was the afternoon before Christmas," he

said, "and several American sea-captains whose vessels were lying at anchor in the port of Bombay, India, arrived at the conclusion that they could not spend the coming day with more pleasure than to visit the renowned cave temples on the Island of Elephanta.

"Accordingly the next morning the gentlemen met on the deck of a wealthy Parsee shipbroker's yacht to enjoy the lovely sail of some twelve miles.

"I was the only European of the party who had ever been ashore on the spot so revered by the natives of that district; nevertheless, I anticipated fully as delightful an excursion as did any of my companions.

"We were favored with a brisk breeze; yet nearly two hours were occupied in covering the distance which intervened between the city and the island, where, as soon as the anchor was dropped, the first disagreeable portion of the journey was encountered.

"The water about the shore was too shallow to admit of the yacht's approaching nearer than

fifty yards, consequently that space had to be traversed in a canoe. Even when this light craft refused to float there still remained about sixty feet of soft black mud to be gotten over; and this was done upon the backs of coolies, we austere mariners presenting anything but a dignified aspect in the transit, and we congratulated ourselves that none of our sailors were present to witness the ludicrous situation.

"When once on *terra firma* we indulged in a hearty laugh at each other, and then began the ascent of the hundred stone steps which led to the plateau in front of the principal temple.

"The description of the wonderful cave of the elephants has been frequently given, and so great a sailor as Tom must have seen or heard of it."

"Yes, sir, I've seen it," said Tom.

"I will not, therefore, attempt a description," said Mr. Ashley, "but will pass on to an incident which struck me with astonishment not unmingled with horror and alarm.

"We had just completed lunch, during the enjoyment of which we had been greatly enter-

tained with the recital of several stories by an old English sergeant who was in charge of the place.

“‘Gentlemen,’ observed the soldier, as he rose from the stone on which he had been seated cross-legged, ‘if you don’t think it’s too hot outside, I’d like you to come with me and see some fun.’

“‘What is it?’ we asked.

“‘Just before you invited me to join you at that excellent *tiffin*, one of these black fellows’ (waving his hand toward a group of natives who stood by) ‘informed me that he had treed, or rather *holed*, a cobra. He says, too, that his brother, a regular snake-charmer, is coming in a little while to secure the reptile. I told the chap to wait until we had finished eating so that we might witness the sport.’

“‘Will not the undertaking be fraught with considerable danger?’ asked one of our party.

“‘It might be to either you or me, Captain, but I think not to the cooly. Then if he should get a nip he’d die happy, for they rev-

erence the cobra almost as a deity. What say you, shall we go ?’

“Of course we all assented, for this was too novel a sight to be allowed to escape our notice; so we followed the Englishman and the little band of Hindus out of the cave, and through a narrow path in the jungle, until we came to a small opening where the ground was covered with broken and jagged rocks.

“Here we saw a man standing with one bare foot resting upon a small flat stone, as though his whole duty was to keep the slab in its place. Beside him sat another cooly, who as we approached was busily engaged in wrapping a piece of red flannel about the end of a long bamboo stick.

“‘Watch, sahib. Bimeby see snake!’ said the latter individual in broken English.

“When he had secured the cloth, he motioned to his companion to stand aside. No sooner had the man stepped back, than the stone was seen to move; and suddenly, as though from beneath it, protruded the head of a cobra.

“‘The snake is not sure of his ground, else he would have darted out like a flash,’ remarked the sergeant.

“Their gaze was bent upon the man with the bamboo. As soon as the reptile appeared, the flannel was placed within six inches of its glittering, bead-like eyes. The venomous creature, catching sight of the cloth, seemed to consider it an enemy; for the neck or gills swelled, the head flattened, the lower jaw dropped, allowing us an instantaneous glimpse of the deadly fangs ere they buried themselves in the thick wad of woollen.

“If it had been the intention of his snakeship to emerge entirely from the hole and ‘continue the battle on deck,’ as one of the captains afterwards phrased it, he was frustrated in his design; for the native repeatedly thrust the flannel toward him, and each time the cobra bit at it fiercely.

“‘That’s to draw out the poison,’ declared the sergeant. ‘Now watch the Hindu.’

“In a moment or two the fellow handed the

bamboo to his brother, and taking the cotton cloth from about his loins, wrapped it around his right arm. Then motioning to his assistant to step farther back, he waited until the now nearly exhausted reptile began to again wriggle out of his hole to follow up the attack, when springing forward, the native grasped the serpent just back of the head, and drawing it forth, held it aloft, allowing it to coil itself about his wrist and arm.

“‘The snake is as harmless as a dove now,’ observed the sergeant. ‘He could not bite the cooly anyway. If his fangs should chance to scratch the man’s flesh, it would only cause a sore, and not have a fatal result; but there’s poison enough in that flannel on the stick to kill a whole platoon of dragoons.’

“‘What will the fellow do with the cobra now that he has got it?’ I asked.

“‘You may see him exhibit it down aboard your ship next Sunday,’ was the reply, with a laugh.

“‘Is he, then, one of those snake-charmers

of whom we encounter so many in the city?' inquired another of the party.

"‘Yes, one of the best; and now that he has shown you how he collects the pets with which he performs, he’ll soon be asking for *baksheesh*. But don’t give the fellow more than three or four anas [ana is 3 cents], or he will be getting too high notions.’

"We did not, however, take the sergeant’s well-meant advice; for we thought that two rupees were none too much to compensate the Hindu for his daring exploit, and to reward him for the pleasure which he had bestowed upon us that Christmas afternoon at Elephantia."

CHAPTER V.

THE MUTINY.

WHEN Mr. Ashley had concluded his story, the defenders of the fortress sat about their fire chatting and smoking until the night was well advanced. Once, and once only, Mr. Ashley and his companions caught sight of a dark form as it rose up from the underbrush, paused a moment, and then dropped back again into concealment.

“Our re-enforcement has arrived,” whispered the Englishman. “Now, Robert, you and Tom go and obtain a little rest, while Manuel and I remain on guard.”

“Can I not stay here with you?” eagerly asked the boy; “it would be impossible for me to sleep.”

“I do not know at what moment the villains

may return, or in what manner they will make the attack. If they should open fire on us from the woods, two people would make a smaller target for their bullets than three," returned the leader kindly.

"But, sir, you will be in as much danger as I," said the lad hesitatingly.

What would have been the reply of the chief it is difficult to state; for at that moment footsteps, as of quite a numerous band, were heard approaching, and soon the whole party that had gone in search of bark emerged from the forest.

Throwing the burdens which they carried to the ground at a little distance from the fire, the cascarilleros and the guides stepped forward.

"How is it, my men," began Mr. Ashley, "you have returned earlier than I expected? You could not have met with good fortune on the trip."

"There is no more cinchona around for many miles," replied one of the number sulkily.

"Ah, I feared that we should soon exhaust

the supply in this neighborhood. I am sorry, for it will compel us to change our camp. Never mind, all but the guides may go to their quarters. They will remain with me a while, as I wish to consult with them regarding our next move."

This command of Mr. Ashley excited no suspicion on the part of his treacherous followers; for it was the most natural thing in the world for the leader to confer with the men who were familiar with the country, before changing the location of the camp.

The faces of the cascarilleros, however, were dark and lowering as they betook themselves to their rude quarters, but they said nothing.

Leaving sailor Tom and Manuel well armed, to stand guard on the outside, the Englishman and Robert preceded the guides into the hut. The interior was lighted by two lanterns; and the illumination, though not particularly brilliant, was yet sufficient to render the features of each individual plainly discernible.

When Mr. Ashley had seated himself upon a small bale of goods, he looked up into the countenances of the guides, and calmly asked,—

“Now, my men, when do the treacherous bark-hunters propose to make the attack?”

Had the white man deliberately discharged his rifle at the breast of the guide who stood nearest to him he could not have been more astonished. They were all thrown into the greatest confusion.

“O señor, señor!” exclaimed one who was the first to recover from his consternation. “It is not our fault! The cascarilleros have threatened us with death if we did not join them in their plot, or if we even hinted a word to you of what they intended to do.”

“Of that fact I am well assured,” answered the leader not unkindly. “For had it been otherwise I should have allowed you to remain with them, ignorant that their conspiracy had been discovered; and you would have been obliged to share the punishment which I purpose to mete out to the ungrate-



The Conspirators.

ful rascals. But, tell me, what is their whole scheme? And believe me, that whatever it may be, I have ample force at hand to suppress the uprising."

"You shall hear, señor," returned the first speaker. "And glad I am that you have discovered the plot, though how you did so I do not know."

Mr. Ashley smiled at this delicately propounded query, and the guide continued,—

"The cascarilleros are wicked men. They say to us, 'The chief is very rich; he has bales of goods which we can trade with the Indians. We have gathered for him plenty of bark; this we can take to the south and sell to the Peruvians. He has arms and ammunition with which we can defend ourselves. Come, we will kill him and his friends, then go far, far away, and no one but ourselves will ever know what became of the white men.'"

"Ah! A wicked plot indeed!" remarked the Englishman; "and I fear that some of

the conspirators will repent it bitterly. But I would not have any of the poor wretches killed. Let me think how we can avoid bloodshed."

The latter part of the speech which Mr. Ashley made, as it were, to himself was in English, and therefore understood by Robert.

"Why would it not be a good plan, sir," suggested the boy, "to instruct Cutch-la-co-las to surround the mutineers with his warriors, and by our combined forces awe them into subjection?"

"It is the only thing to do," answered Mr. Ashley thoughtfully. "But how can we get word to the Indian without exciting suspicion? That is the question."

Mr. Ashley was allowed no opportunity to put the plan into action; for at that moment a series of fierce yells, followed by the sharp crack of two rifles, broke the stillness of the night, and the next instant a perfect pandemonium of sound reigned without.

"They have brought on the attack! We

must hasten to the support of Tom and Manuel, and prevent Cutch-la-co-las and his warriors from indulging in wholesale slaughter."

And Mr. Ashley and Robert, clutching their weapons, darted through the doorway to throw themselves into the thickest of the fight.

CHAPTER VI.

QUELLING THE UPRISING.

DESPITE the fact of having won over the recreant guides to their side, our friends would undoubtedly have been worsted had it not been for the support of the Indians; for though Mr. Ashley's party was better armed, still they were greatly in the minority.

As it was, the contest was a short one; for when the miscreants saw the army of dusky forms swarming about them, heard the shrill cries of the naked warriors, and felt the stings of the tiny darts from the formidable blow-guns, they were struck with consternation and thrown into confusion.

Loud above the babel of sound Mr. Ashley's voice could be distinguished, calling upon Cutch-la-co-las to check his people in their

fierce onslaught; for as both friend and foe were struggling in one mass, his own loyal followers were as liable to receive injuries from the flying arrows as were the traitorous cascarilleros and bearers.

The faithful Indian heard the command; and, though much against his inclination, he restrained his warriors, and soon the conflict ceased. But the mutineers, as well as the white men and the guides, found themselves completely encircled by a dusky band, Cutch-la-co-las having thrown his followers into that position to prevent the escape of any of the vanquished.

As Mr. Ashley saw this move he became alarmed, and the thought flashed into his mind that perhaps the wily savage had assisted him in suppressing the mutiny for the purpose of doing away with more or less of his followers. This would consequently weaken his force, and thus render him practically powerless to resist an attack from the Indians.

Acting upon the impulse of the moment,

the rifle of the Englishman was pointed full at the breast of Cutch-la-co-las, and the white man hissed through his clinched teeth, —

“What does this mean, chief?”

Just at that instant Robert sprang forward and laid his hand upon the weapon of the leader, saying in a pleading tone, —

“Please, Mr. Ashley, do not shoot him! I know he is our friend.”

The faces of the Englishman and the Indian were indeed a study. That of the leader of the expedition expressed a mingling of surprise at the boy's temerity, and a determination not to be ensnared by any wile of his heretofore dusky ally; while the stolid features of Cutch-la-co-las displayed a calm disdain of the threatening attitude of the European.

Without turning his head, the chief cast a grateful look upon the lad who had interceded for him, as though he would say, “I appreciate your act, and will not forget it.”

The warrior was standing as he had stood at

the close of the battle ; a long-bladed knife was in his left hand, while his right clutched the handle of a hatchet. Not the conventional tomahawk of the North American Indian, but a carpenter's tool. Both these he dropped to the ground at Mr. Ashley's menacing gesture, and tranquilly folding his arms across his naked breast, he said in a subdued voice, —

“The señor believes that Cutch-la-co-las is acting a lie, but the boy” (indicating Robert) “knows that his heart is true. Let the white man shoot, and Cutch-la-co-las will be at peace ; but his people will avenge him.”

The butt of Mr. Ashley's rifle left his shoulder, and extending his right hand he said frankly, —

“Chief! for your threat I care not ; but I will admit that I wronged you in my thoughts, and I ask your forgiveness.”

“Cutch-la-co-las has nothing to forgive. A warrior may be angry with his brother and bare his knife to strike ; but the blade will turn aside as the blow descends, for his heart would fail him.”

Then, as though there were nothing further to be said to his white friend, the savage stepped to the side of Robert, and laying his swarthy palm upon the boy's head he murmured, —

“The seed falls to the ground, and the rain washes the earth over it until it is covered. The sun sheds its light upon the soil, and the shoot appears. Days pass, and it becomes a shrub; while the warriors sleep, the shrub grows to be a tree; when the weary man awakes he finds a grateful shade protecting him from the heat, and he is thankful. Thus will it be with you, son of Cutch-la-co-las!

“When the dart of the Indian's weapon pierced the tender flesh of the white boy, and the leaden bullets from the tube which speaks with fire struck this breast” (and the warrior laid his finger upon the scars which still slightly showed), “then was the seed sown! But when the poor Indian was nursed and allowed to go on his way with his weapons in his hand, then was the sun shining upon the seed. That seed sprang into life when the hungry puma dropped

from the branches of the trees ; and when the white boy turned aside the weapon of his master, there was the shrub ! What the *tree* will be, Cutch-la-co-las will show ! This is the Indian's gratitude ! ”

The full purport of the speech was not understood by Robert, for it was delivered in the native language ; but the gestures which accompanied it made its meaning clear, and the lad felt that he had, indeed, a life long friend in the Indian.

Day was now breaking ; and it became incumbent upon Mr. Ashley to mete out some punishment to the leaders of the mutiny, and also to care for the wounded. The latter task, however, the Indians had voluntarily assumed ; and the treatment of the injuries which they themselves had inflicted, though primitive in its nature, eventually proved most efficacious.

One of the cascarilleros, and he the chief in the revolt, had fallen before the rifle of sailor Tom at the first moment of the attack. The others were brought before Mr. Ashley, and the

poor cowardly wretches trembled as they met the stern gaze of the kind master whom they had so treacherously attempted to wrong.

"Why have you sought to murder us?" asked the leader. "Have you ever received any injury at our hands?"

"Señor, we have done wrong, and wish to be forgiven," faltered one.

"And you shall be," was the prompt and unexpected reply. "Now, tell me, did you lie when you stated there was no bark to be found in this vicinity?"

"We did, señor!" was the shame-faced answer. "The country for many miles about is rich with cinchona."

"Then go and rest for this day, and prepare to search the forest to-morrow with a will. But, remember, that another act of treachery on your part, no matter how slight, shall be punished with instant death! Go!"

And the crest-fallen cascarilleros retired to their quarters, leaving Cutch-la-co-las and his followers astonished at the magnanimity of the white man.

CHAPTER VII.

REWARDING CUTCH-LA-CO-LAS.

THE cascarilleros had brought in only about fifty pounds of green bark. This was spread out to dry, and Mr. Ashley immediately laid out a systematic plan for his men to follow on their next expedition.

Upon a piece of paper he inscribed a circle, the centre of which represented the camp. From this he drew lines, five in number, to the circumference.

On each line he wrote the name of a cascarillero; these were the courses which the hunters were to follow, accompanied by two bearers apiece, for a distance of ten miles, making their way slowly and in a zigzag manner, so as to cover thoroughly every rod of ground.

At sundown the leader called his people together and minutely explained his plans to them.

If large trees were found they were to mark the spot so that they might easily return to the place another time with more help; but all the small growth was to be stripped, and the bark carried along with them. The distance straight from the camp allotted to each party was, as before stated, ten miles, although in traversing it the men would actually travel over forty.

The leader had a double purpose in thus separating his force: the first was, that the section of country round about could be more quickly and thoroughly scoured; while the second was, to keep the mischief-making cascarilleros apart, and not allow them an opportunity to concoct another insurrection.

"It is what I should have done at the first," remarked Mr. Ashley to Robert. The following morning the hunters and bearers radiated from the camp, leaving only the guides and the three white people behind.

After the expedition had been gone perhaps two hours, Cutch-la-co-las, followed by a few of his warriors, put in an appearance. They deliberately seated themselves on the ground before the hut, but said nothing of the object of their visit. But Mr. Ashley understood. Rising from a box on which he had been sitting, the white man began :

“Cutch-la-co-las, you have done me a great service ; you shall receive your reward.”

“The Indian has asked for nothing.”

The Englishman smiled at this artless reply.

“Nevertheless, he shall find that his friends are not ungrateful.” Then Mr. Ashley called Tom and Manuel, and the three entered the rude abode together.

Most of the weapons with which the bark-hunters were armed belonged to the company for which they were working ; but Robert was the owner of a Colt's navy revolver, whose chambers were loaded from the muzzle, and it was discharged by the aid of percussion caps.

When his chief had disappeared, the boy drew the revolver from his belt, advanced to the side of Cutch-la-co-las and handed it, with powder-flask, bullet-pouch, and cap-box to the Indian.

A white man would not be more overjoyed to receive a fortune than was the native at this present. He saw that the weapon was already loaded, as he was more or less familiar with firearms. Then, tucking the ammunition into the folds of the cloth which he wore about his waist, the delighted savage sprang to his feet, and discharged chamber after chamber into the air as fast as he could draw back the hammer and press the trigger, all the while capering about like a child pleased with a new toy.

The fusillade brought Mr. Ashley hurriedly to the doorway.

"What is the matter?" he asked quickly, as he emerged, rifle in hand.

"I gave my revolver to the chief, and he seems to be testing its quality," replied Rob-



Cutch-la-co-las and his revolver.

ert, himself well pleased at the happiness manifested by his dusky friend.

"You should have consulted me first," returned Mr. Ashley somewhat sternly. "Were Cutch-la-co-las other than what we know him to be, the possession of such a weapon as that might be disastrous to our party. However, I will not upbraid you, as I, myself, intended to present him with some antiquated fire-arms."

Now followed the distribution of gifts which Tom and Manuel were bringing from the hut. There were several small bales of cheap printed cotton cloths, beads, knives, hatchets — in fact, almost everything that would tend to gladden the heart of a child of the wilderness.

Quite a quantity there was too; for Mr. Ashley knew that every man and woman in Cutch-la-co-las' band must receive something, but the apportioning he left to the chief himself. To each of the Indians who were present, the European gave a muzzle-loading shotgun, there being only six in the party, and these represented the leaders of the tribe.

"Thus the white chief pays his brother for saving him from his enemies."

Cutch-la-co-las did not reply at once ; but raising his voice he uttered a loud, shrill cry, which had a magical effect.

In a moment, at least twenty women, old hags, matrons, and maidens, sprang into the clearing, and eagerly laying hold of everything upon the ground, save the weapons of the men, they disappeared as suddenly as they came, well-loaded with the gifts of the Englishman.

"I'm a porpoise if the gals weren't just a-laying in the bush, waiting to be piped on deck," exclaimed Tom. "The old fellow must a-knowed he was going to get something, and so brought his women-folks along to tote off the spoils."

"That's just it, Tom," returned Mr. Ashley. "The South American Indians are not very different from the rest of mankind. If they perform a service for another, they expect pay for it."

After the female members of his family had

departed, Cutch-la-co-las delivered a flowery speech of thanks, and then, with his revolver in one hand and the shot-gun on his shoulder, he, too, strode away into the forest, followed by the rest of his band.

"I suppose that is the last we shall see of that chap," said Mr. Ashley.

"I hope not, for he is a noble fellow," observed Robert.

"True, he is, my lad, for a native of these low latitudes. Few who are indigenous to this soil are possessed of such manly traits as we have discovered in him."

CHAPTER VIII.

DAYS IN CAMP.

THE days passed slowly in camp, for there was little or nothing to do. Much of the time was passed in the shadow of the great trees or before the nightly camp-fire; and here Mr. Ashley's store of reminiscence was unlocked for Robert's amusement, while Tom Bowlin helped to fill in the time with many a quaint sea-yarn.

As the time wore away, and they sighed for a railroad or a camel train to hasten the return of the bark harvest, Mr. Ashley remarked, —

“It would be agreeable to have in this bark-hunting such trained animal help as I have seen in India.”

“What animals were they, Mr. Ashley?” queried Robert; “were they elephants?”

"Yes," Mr. Ashley replied. "Some few years ago a syndicate was formed to divest the luxuriant forests of Ceylon of their valuable product of teak-wood. I was despatched to 'the spicy isle' to look after the interests of the company, and it was while on this service that I had occasion to note with astonishment the intelligence of the elephants employed in the work.

"The timber grew from five to ten miles inland from Point De Galle, the port of shipment. With the imperfect roads, the transportation of this timber to the sea-coast promised to be a difficult matter.

"But the natives were equal to the emergency. Nearly a hundred coolies were employed in felling the trees and trimming the trunks into suitable lengths; with this, however, their labor ended, and then the elephant came forward for his share in the work.

"The huge beasts worked in pairs. A large truck had been built with solid wheels of not more than two feet and a half in diameter.

This truck was merely a framework; but on this the teak-wood logs needed to be placed, and then drawn down to the sea. The timber was very heavy, but a derrick or other hoisting apparatus was out of the question. The elephants, therefore, had to take the place of hoisting machinery.

“The intelligent beasts would place themselves one at either end of the heavy log; then thrusting their tusks beneath it, they would throw their trunks above it; and clasping it thus firmly, they would lift and carry it to the truck, and then return for another. There was one coolie driver to each pair of elephants; but his labor consisted only of trotting at the heels of his team, alternately shouting to them his words of praise or admonition.

“It was surprising to see how the elephants would work their way with the heavy log between the smaller trees that had been left standing. At times they would have to go sidewise; again, one would go back while the other swung forward, until at last the log

would be placed on the truck with a precision not to be surpassed by a skilful mechanic.

“When perhaps a hundred pieces of timber had been thus piled up, the whole load was firmly bound together with chains, and then the trip to the sea began.

“Six pairs of the elephants were harnessed to the truck, while four pairs were hitched to the hinder part. What these latter four were for I was for a while at a loss to know, but before a mile had been traversed I learned their use.

“The six pairs made surprisingly good speed towing this ungainly land-raft over the rough roadway. They did well enough up hill or on a level; but when a decline was reached, then it was that the four pairs of beasts following on behind were brought into action.

“These hind elephants were harnessed differently from those ‘on lead.’ The front teams had broad breast-straps to which were riveted long, stout ‘traces.’ But the four spans that brought up the rear were fitted with collars,

rude saddles, very wide and heavy breeching-straps, and 'traces.' These traces, however, were put on 'hind side before,' and led toward the elephants' trunks instead of toward their tails.

"Now, when the raft began a descent, these eight elephants would settle themselves back in the 'breeching,' and planting their huge feet in the ground, would 'hang back,' and allow themselves to be dragged very slowly toward the bottom of the hill.

"It was a most comical sight to see these monstrous animals literally being towed at the stern of this uncouth raft. They did not seem to enjoy it, however; for they would toss their trunks wildly in the air, at the same time making a noise that was decidedly like a groan; while their bright black eyes sparkled like balls of polished jet.

"Their companions 'on lead' seemed to thoroughly comprehend the discomfiture of their brothers astern, and, human-like, became exultant over their annoyance, filling the air with their trumpet calls.

"Thus the raft was taken to the sea over several miles of rough, uneven road. When the shore was reached, the logs had to be built into a floating raft, so as to be taken off to the waiting vessel lying at anchor in the harbor.

"This work also needed to be performed by the elephants; and they seemed to enjoy it more than any other part of the labor, for the water was cool and refreshing.

"They would walk in until only their heads and a corresponding portion of their backs were visible; only thus could they gain temporary relief from the myriads of flies and other insects that continually swarmed about them.

"The completion of the floating raft finished the labor of these intelligent beasts. At whatever time in the day their task was over, their masters would allow them the remaining portion for themselves; and they wandered about at will, seeming to thoroughly enjoy their liberty, to which they were surely entitled, for they had worked continuously for five days at their laborious task."

Robert was greatly interested in this account of the intelligence of the trained elephant, and echoed Mr. Ashley's wish for some such help to spur on the lazy cascarilleros.

But at last even these deliberate bark-hunters appeared. Their return was hailed with joy. After they had been absent from camp a week, they began to drop in one after another, tired and hungry, but all loaded with larger or smaller bundles of the valuable cinchona.

Those who had gone in a southerly direction seemed to have met with the most success, and and it was deemed advisable to move toward that point of the compass.

The large tree had been located, and after some hours' rest the hunters went to strip it; this time Robert and Tom accompanied them.

As the boy saw the valuable product in its primitive form, spreading a broad canopy of bright green wax-like leaves, interspersed with clusters of drooping purple flowers, and emitting a fragrance almost oppressive, his enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Springing to a parasitical vine, which twined about the trunk, the lad began to climb aloft towards the branches, disregarding the calls of his companions. He had reached a height of some fifteen feet, when he felt a terrible sting upon his right hand.

So sudden and intense was the pain that for a moment the boy forgot his hold, and with a shriek, fell helpless to the ground.

In an instant Tom and Manuel were by the side of Robert. His left leg was doubled beneath him in an unnatural position, and the sailor at once saw that the limb had sustained a fracture.

"His leg is broken!" exclaimed the mariner. "Come, let us straighten it out."

"No, no," murmured the lad, who had not lost consciousness, "it is my hand." And holding up the member, the experienced eye of Manuel detected a tiny red spot upon the fleshy part of the ball of the thumb.

A look of consternation overspread the face of the Ecuadorian; and he whispered in the

ear of the sailor, so as not to be overheard by the youthful sufferer, —

“He has been stung by a scorpion!”

“And that means death,” groaned Tom.

“S’pose we wait, boy him die; s’pose work quick, boy him live,” was the answer in broken English.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POISONED HAND.

WHAT Manuel's mode of treating the case of the injured youth would have been it is hard to say ; but, ere he had time to begin any operation, the bushes opened and Cutch-lacolas, the friendly Indian, stood before them.

He uttered no word, but knelt quickly at Robert's side, and taking the wounded hand in his own looked closely at the spot where the sting of the scorpion had penetrated. The discoloration about the puncture was rapidly deepening in hue and spreading, showing how actively the venom was dispersing itself.

The savage, without consulting the friends of the boy, drew his knife, and, with its lance-like point made two deep incisions in the shape of a cross directly over the wound.

Then in a loud voice he called earnestly to some of his people who had not yet put in an appearance, apparently sending them on some important mission; after which, without the slightest hesitation, he placed Robert's hand to his mouth and began slowly to draw forth the poison that was already making rapid progress towards the citadel of life.

The youthful patient through extreme pain had lost consciousness, and now lay like one dead.

"There's no doubt, Manuel," said Tom, "that the scorpion's sting is the most serious of the two injuries. The lad's leg is broken, though; and if we don't straighten it out, now that he doesn't know what is going on, he will suffer a heap of pain when he returns to consciousness. So lend me a hand to do what we can with it, while the chief is busy on the other wound. It's safe to say that the Indian knows more about the bites and stings of the insects and reptiles of the woods than do we white men; but when it comes to a shattered bone, we're the ones to turn doctor."

As the kind-hearted sailor essayed to place the leg, which had been fractured between the ankle and knee, in a natural position, a moan of pain issued from the lips of Robert; but the two men continued their work as tenderly as possible.

It was a rude bit of surgery, yet it answered the purpose. The mariner divested himself of his shirt, which he immediately tore up into bandages, and swathed the injured member; over these he bound a number of small, stout reeds, and his task was finished.

But ere his work was completed two of the followers of Cutch-la-co-las appeared, each carrying a stick that had been split for a few inches of its length, and in the slot of each of these primitive pincers squirmed a live scorpion, which, in obedience to the orders of their chief, they had succeeded in capturing.

The tiny reptiles were at once crushed, and the disgusting-looking mass applied to the wound, which was now bleeding freely, and firmly bound in position.

The work of making the unfortunate youth as comfortable as possible occupied his friends perhaps half an hour; then, after bathing Robert's temples with a little water from a spring that was not far distant, the boy opened his eyes, but did not speak; the pain which he was suffering was too intense to admit of words.

"Shall we bear the lad to the white man's camp?" asked Cutch-la-co-las in Spanish, rising to his feet.

"That we will, chief," replied Tom eagerly. "And as lively as good, strong legs can carry him, for he can't be very comfortable lying here on the hard ground."

Again the voice of the Indian rang through the forest. This time his call was answered by fully a dozen of his warriors.

Obedying some instructions, the natives hurried away; but soon reappeared, laden with long, straight poles and coils of small, though tough, fibrous vines, with which they at once began to construct a rude litter.

When it was completed, Robert was carefully lifted and laid upon it; then, at a word from their leader, the Indians raised the stretcher to their shoulders, and the march camp-ward was begun. Tom and Manuel followed with Cutch-la-co-las, leaving the rest of the party to strip the cinchona tree, the climbing of which had so nearly proved fatal to our young hero.

Mr. Ashley was greatly moved when he saw the burden which the natives bore. Had Robert been his own son, the kind-hearted Englishman could not have been more affected.

Although the sailor and the guide had bound the boy's fractured limb in a straight position, it was not so skilful a piece of surgery as the leader could perform; for he was supplied with all the appliances necessary for such an operation. After the patient had been laid upon his cot, Mr. Ashley undid the work of his subordinates, and set the fracture as completely as it could have been done by an experienced surgeon.

During the fever which followed his injuries,

Robert was nursed and tended with the utmost care, not only by Mr. Ashley and Tom, but Cutch-la-co-las positively refused to leave the bedside of his young friend.

To the broken limb the Indian paid no attention, leaving that to the white men; but he claimed the entire charge of the wounded hand, and at the expiration of a week the youthful bark-hunter was so far recovered that he felt little inconvenience from the sting of the scorpion, which might have proved fatal.

Mr. Ashley had delayed changing the camp until the boy was strong enough to stand the journey. When, at last, the day arrived to make the move, Cutch-la-co-las, with his Indians, was on hand to carry the invalid to the new quarters; they performed their task most cheerfully, for they had all grown to love the patient, gentle lad who had interceded with his superior in behalf of their chief.

CHAPTER X.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

DAYS passed. The expedition had been absent from the sea-coast some three months ; and as their stock of provisions was growing low, Mr. Ashley deemed it expedient to begin the return march to Guayaquil.

They had been successful even beyond the expectation of the leader of the party ; and had it not been for the accident to Robert, they would have turned their faces westward more than satisfied with the time spent in the wilds of South America.

Although the bone in Robert's leg had firmly knitted, still the limb was not yet strong enough to bear the boy's weight over the miles and miles of rough country which must be traversed ere they reached a place where they could procure mules.

The "bearers," one and all, were willing, nay, anxious, to carry the lad on their shoulders; but to this, Cutch-la-co-las, who with his people had remained near the bark-hunters, would not listen.

"No," he said. "The Indian has shown his son the seed, the shrub, and the tree," referring to his speech of gratitude at the time of the mutiny. "The tree was when Cutch-la-co-las with his own lips drew the poison of the scorpion from the wounded hand; but now he will go farther, and show his son and his friends the *fruit* of gratitude."

The untutored savage was as good as his word. Every foot of the weary way up and down the steep sides of the rugged Andes, Robert was tenderly borne upon the dusky shoulders of the faithful Indians, the chief himself frequently assuming a portion of the burden.

Many miles away from their own country the natives followed the white men, far, far beyond the limit which any of them had heretofore travelled. At the first signs of civiliza-

tion — which, however, was nothing more than a scarcely discernible path — the Indians began to exhibit symptoms of nervousness which were not lost upon Mr. Ashley; and calling a halt, he, yet not without some difficulty, persuaded them to return to their homes.

They were loaded with all the goods which were left of those which the hunters had brought into the forest to barter, and the Indians were made happy; but Cutch-la-co-las would touch nothing. He seemed to be greatly affected by the parting, particularly when he came to say good-by to Robert.

The stoicism of the warrior was for the moment forgotten. Placing both of his hands upon the boy's shoulders he peered earnestly into the pale, upturned face before him; and then, as though ashamed of the weakness which he had already displayed, and to conceal his emotion which he could no longer restrain, the chief turned abruptly. Then, without a word, he walked away, following in the footsteps of his people who had preceded him, and the

noble Cutch-la-co-las was seen no more, while Robert, with tear-stained cheeks, remained gazing at the dark, interminable forest that had swallowed up his never-to-be-forgotten friend.

The succeeding day Mr. Ashley despatched Manuel and another guide on ahead, in light marching order, to procure mules, and with them hasten back to meet the expedition, whose progress was of necessity slow, laden as the men were with bales of bark, provisions, arms, and ammunition.

A week elapsed before the leaders of the cavalcade caught sight of Manuel and his companion returning, followed by a number of mules and their drivers. Although many miles yet intervened between our friends and the largest river on the western coast of South America, still it seemed as if the journey was almost at an end, they having passed through so many dangers and hardships.

At times Robert would experience a twinge of pain in his leg; yet he was able to sit his animal without serious inconvenience,

and the rest of the march was made quite rapidly.

The successful expedition entered Guayaquil a little over four months from the time it had left it. They returned rich with a store of the precious cinchona for which they had been despatched.

No statement was made to the authorities regarding the treachery of the cascarilleros; and they were paid in full for their services, as were the guides and bearers, Manuel receiving an extra share for his fidelity. Robert and sailor Tom found themselves in possession of more money than they could have earned in two years upon shipboard.

"Why it's better 'n pearl-divin,' this bark-hunting is," Tom said as he once more counted over his "dividend" from his work as a cascarillero.

"Why, were you ever a pearl-diver, Tom?" asked Robert.

"No, but I've seen 'em at it," replied Tom, "and sometimes they bring up a fortune."

"Not often a fortune, Tom," said Mr. Ashley, who had overheard the remark. "I've watched that pearl-hunting business myself among the West Indies; and while it is interesting to watch, it is neither a safe nor a pleasant occupation."

"Do they get the pearls from oysters, Mr. Ashley?" asked Robert.

"Many people have the impression that the pearl is found only in the oyster," Mr. Ashley replied; "and that these are gathered beneath the waters of tropical America, Persia, and India. It is true that these bivalves frequently secrete the most valuable specimens of the opaque gem, but they cannot claim the exclusive production of these much-sought-for articles of commerce.

"Oysters grown in any locality frequently contain a prize; while even the fresh-water clam, which has its home in the beds of your clear-running streams of New England, is eagerly hunted, in the hope of finding an occasional pearl.

“Often, at your home, Robert, you must have paused before some well-kept garden to admire the beautiful conical-shaped shells arranged along the sides of the walks, and wondered what creatures had used these houses for their habitations. These are the conch-shells; they are found in great profusion about the Bahamas and West India Islands. This species of mollusk are pearl-producing; and although the gems do not rank in price with those taken from the oyster, they are considered by many to be much handsomer, as they are of a most delicate shade of pink, and as a rule are quite large, not infrequently being found the size of a pea. A perfect one of this dimension may be purchased in the West Indies for forty or fifty dollars, according to the financial condition of the finder; but in the markets of Boston or New York it would bring a much larger sum.

“Some few years since, on Key Francis, a small coral island some twelve miles off the northern coast of Cuba, I met a party of

conch-hunters who had come from the mainland. All they had to do was to roll up their trousers, wade out upon the reefs where the water was shallow, and gather the clumsy fellows as they crawled slowly along the bottom.

The oyster-divers spread their catch in the sun to allow the fleshy substance to decompose, then the shells are washed and the pearl sought for. But the conch-hunters pursue a different course, and one which seems very cruel. They take a common fish-hook, to which is attached a piece of string perhaps two feet in length, insert the sharp point into the orifice of the heavy shell and bury the barb in the head of the helpless creature. The conches are then hung in rows upon poles, whose ends rest on crotched sticks driven into the ground. Slowly the mollusk is drawn from its abode by the weight of its own habitation; but so tenacious are they of life, that two hours or more will elapse ere they will let go their hold and give up the ghost. The shell is not

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as yet wholly clean, but a thorough rinsing round in a tub of water will dislodge any pearl which may be lurking within.

“One would think that the shells could be broken; but many blows with a heavy hammer would be needed before any impression could be made on the flint-like substance, and this is too arduous a task for the languid Cuban.

“The conch-pearl hunters never get very rich. Scarcely more than one out of a thousand conch-shells contains a prize, and half a dozen men would not be able to gather and cleanse half that number in a day. The shells find a ready market at one dollar and a half or two dollars per hundred, according to their beauty; and thus the native is enabled to earn a living, even if not fortunate enough to obtain a pearl.”

Mr. Ashley had received orders to return to England and bring with him the products of the expedition, which he was very proud and happy to do; consequently, when the

next steamer left Guayaquil for Panama, it had in the cabin as passengers, Mr. Ashley, Tom Bowlin, and the boy Robert.

They crossed the Isthmus, and again embarked at Aspinwall, and ten days later stepped ashore upon the dock in New York. At that port Mr. Ashley was to take the steamer to England.

Our young hero was anxious to reach his New England home; and as Tom was feeling too rich to go to sea at once, he was easily persuaded by the lad to accompany him to the scenes of his childhood.

"My dear friends," said Mr. Ashley at parting, "you must keep me posted in regard to your movements. I cannot remain idle for any length of time, and no doubt shall be away before long on another expedition, in which case I want you to accompany me."

"I'd be only too glad to go, Cap'n," replied Tom heartily, "for never in all my life have I cruised with so square a man."

Robert was of the same mind; and thus

they separated, mutually pleased with one another.

Robert and Tom arrived in the little New England village which had been the birth-place of the former, and were joyfully welcomed by the lad's widowed mother and fair sister.

For many evenings, when seated before the glowing fire of logs that blazed upon the hearth, the two travellers found willing listeners as they recited the adventures which had befallen them among the bark-hunters of South America.

COLONEL THORNDIKE'S
ADVENTURES.

COLONEL THORNDIKE'S ADVENTURES.

CHAPTER I.

A DOG AND A SHIPWRECK.

THE colonel sat in his comfortable library. The two boys, who delighted to browse among their uncle's treasures and curios when they came to visit him, were full of questions as to this and that odd bit or attractive decoration. The questions, of course, led to answers, until finally, as they paused before a well preserved dog-skin, Phil cried impulsively, —

“Uncle Ned, I know this skin has a story about it. Tell us about it, won't you? Was it your dog?”

And so, before he was aware of it, Uncle Ned,

the colonel, was launched into story-telling. Probably few men had so many memories for stories as he; for Colonel Thorndike had been a great traveller, a fearless adventurer, and a keen observer of men and things and animals and events.

"That dog-skin, Phil?" he said. "Well, it's worth its weight in gold to me! Peace to the ashes of the dear fellow that once lived within it.

"If being faithful, if loving another better than one's self, if giving one's life for his friend, merits anything hereafter, that dear old dog must somewhere be receiving his reward." And then the colonel told his story:—

He was with me throughout my service as war-correspondent in the French and German war. He often heard the bullets whistle, but never received a scratch.

One day we were going over a hill, behind some skirmishing lines, when a stray bullet struck me, and nearly knocked the life out of

me. On my hands and knees I crept under the shadow of a low shrub, and fell senseless.

I have only a dim recollection of parching thirst; of frightful things happening that never happened at all; of rain pouring down upon me; of the sun burning me. Then I gradually realized that I was still alive. It was days afterward—I shall never know how many.

That dear old fellow, thin as a shadow, and so hoarse that he could scarcely bark, was running about me, snapping at the crows and the vultures that were hanging above, impatiently waiting for my death.

Slowly I raised myself till I leaned against a rock beside me. Seeing this, the poor brute started off at a run.

I was faint; I was thirsty. If I could only kill one of those vile birds, it would be better than nothing.

I tried to get my pistol from my belt, but it was rusted in, and I had not the strength to draw it out.

A hideous crow came and sat on my foot. I

had not enough energy to frighten him away. My head fell back upon the rock. I was quite ready to die.

At that moment I heard the dog's feet and his fierce panting as he rushed up the hill, dropped something beside me, and sprang at the crow.

He had brought me a large bird, of some sort. It was still fluttering.

Shudder if you will, boys. In my place you would have done the same, I think. I took its throat in my teeth, tore it open, and drank its blood.

For several days, that loyal comrade thus brought me food, whenever I roused enough to let him leave me. He licked my wound, and kept the carrion creatures away while I slept.

At last a squad of soldiers passed under the hill, and he literally dragged one of them to my hiding-place.

God bless him, wherever he is. No! If I were dying of starvation, I do not think that I would sell that skin.

"Well, I shouldn't think you would," exclaimed George, as the colonel concluded his story. And Phil, smoothing down the black dog-skin, said, "Good dog! I wish I had known him. What else did he ever do for you, Uncle Ned?"

"He helped me get away from Paris by balloon," said the colonel; "and he sailed the balloon besides."

The boys expressed incredulity at this; but their uncle said, "It's a fact; I'll tell you about it." And he told them this story of a dog's intelligence:—

It was this way. We were in Paris, he and I. We were caught there by the Prussian army that surrounded the city. We could have gone through the lines on a nationality pass, or a press pass, for we were both foreigners and news-gatherers; but we preferred to stay and see the fun, though we did grow very hungry when tough old cats were selling in the markets at one dollar and thirty cents apiece.

I never dared let that dear fellow out of my sight. Dog-meat had gone up to sixty cents a pound, and marketmen were constantly out after game.

We were walking one day by that centre of all excitement in Paris, whether in peace or war, the Hotel de Ville. The Frenchmen were filling a balloon. For weeks this had been their only means of communication with the world.

There were posters up all about, and the dog and I stopped to read one of them. The announcement stated that there were important despatches which must go that night; and a large reward was offered to any one who would take them out, giving the qualifications required.

I looked at the dog, and the dog looked at me. He wagged his tail, and I nodded my head. Then we walked into the office. We easily convinced the officials that we were to be trusted; the only trouble was that neither of us had ever been up in a balloon.



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All that afternoon we took lessons from the only man left in Paris who understood balloons. They could not let him go.

In the evening the officer gave us the despatches, and I put them in my pocket. They were not so safe with me as they would have been with the dog; but then, you see, he had no pocket.

It was a moonlight night, with just a few clouds. We waited till one covered the moon; for the Prussian guards had learned the secret of the air-ships, and had put a bullet through more than one of them on its flight out of Paris.

The moment the cloud came over the moon, we were cut loose, and at once bounded up and up and up, as though we were in an elevator that kept making fresh starts, and yet never stopped. It was a decidedly unpleasant sensation, and I tried to distract my mind by looking down.

The great city swam about under me for a moment; then the fires burning along the

Prussian lines seemed to whirl like a great wheel of fire. I heard several sharp reports, and saw the flashes down below. I quickly drew my head into the car again; but if the fellows were firing at me, they missed.

It grew cold. It was almost impossible to breathe. Everything was wet in an instant. That black fellow gave the most mournful howl you ever heard; it was the first sound he had made. I tried to speak to him, but the wind and water took my breath away; and before I succeeded, we made another furious leap, and the clear, white moonlight flashed upon our faces.

Suddenly I realized that we had shot through the cloud that was floating so high above the city of Paris, and the thought that we were higher yet, and bounding higher, made my head swim.

I caught the rope that opened the valve and began to pull. I knew I was pulling; but, either from the cold or from something else, my hands were so numb that I could

not feel the rope. Somehow I did not care much whether I pulled or not. I began to topple one way and the other. The dog kept up his howling; but he seemed a mile away. What did I care where the balloon went to? My hands began to slip from the rope; but it did not seem worth my while to try to put them back again. Then I have a vague recollection of collapsing, in a sort of indiscriminate heap, in the bottom of the car.

I don't know how long afterwards I opened my eyes. I was feeling all right. Then I remembered where I was. I sprang to my feet. We were floating over a fruit orchard. There was a village not far away. I looked about to see how it had all happened; and there sat that dear old boy, at the very edge of the car, braced for dear life, holding the valve rope in his teeth, and pulling for all he was worth. His blood-shot eyes rolled up and rested on me, and I could see the very tip of his tail making a faint endeavor to wag.

I threw out the anchor and we touched the ground. A happier dog you never saw. He gave one yelp as he jumped out, and looking up said, as plain as any words could put it: "I reckon we'd better not try ballooning again till one of us knows something about it."

"I should say not," said George. "That was pretty near to getting shipwrecked, wasn't it? Which do you suppose is worse, Uncle Ned — getting balloon-wrecked or getting shipwrecked?"

"Mighty little choice, Georgy," laughed his uncle; "it's six of one to half a dozen of the other."

"Were you ever shipwrecked, Uncle Ned?" Phil asked.

"Shipwrecked?" said the colonel. "Oh, yes; three times in all."

"How?" demanded George.

"Once on a steamer," his uncle replied. "That only amounted to a little excitement

and the loss of my luggage. Once on a Japanese junk, resulting in a vigorous swim for half a mile. Once I was shipwrecked in good earnest. I shall never forget it."

Thereupon, in response to the boys' clamor, the colonel told this story:—

Our staunch schooner went ashore in the straits at Cape Horn.

The wind blew a gale. It always blows there. The night was black as ship's coffee. We had all fast but a jib forward, and a bit of sail aft, to steady her. The sea was running so hard that no anchor could have held us. It was go on, or go down.

We did both.

One who has passed through the straits by daylight, and admired that wilderness of rocks and ledges and wild islands, may perhaps imagine what it would be to fly through at night, before a gale of wind, without a light anywhere, and in such dense darkness that one could not see the rope that he was working.

Two men were at the wheel, two at the prow, and all hands stood waiting.

I was making my way forward, when suddenly the jib flapped against the stays.

The wind was gone! Nothing but a cliff close upon our starboard bow could have done it. I shouted to put the helm hard down; but before the first man could repeat the order, there was a blinding flash of lightning. It was years ago, but I would give all that I possess to obliterate the memory of that sight to-day.

There was a great cliff to starboard; giant rocks were to port; savage ledges rose dead ahead. They were all white with angry foam, and we were making at least eight miles an hour, where no power under heaven could stop us but those rocks.

I yelled an order to let go the anchors, foolish as it was, and started for the helm.

There was another fearful flash, and the whole ship was a white glow. The mast beside me flew in splinters. I saw two men at the wheel fall senseless. A ball of fire danced along the

deck and burst under the water-cask. I saw the great cask thrown from its fastenings and coming directly toward me.

I remember the cask striking me and knocking me down. I remember grasping it to prevent its rolling upon me. Then a loud report roused me. I was still clinging to the cask; but the cask was in the water, striking furiously against the rocks.

It saved my life. It did more; for the water in the cask kept me alive on that barren rock for eight days, till I was rescued.

CHAPTER II.

ICE-PACK, MONSOON, AND DORY.

GEORGE gave a great sigh of satisfaction as his uncle concluded his story. Boys do like the spice of desperation in their stories, and certainly the colonel's situation had been a desperate one.

"What a terrible land that must be in the Straits of Cape Horn," Phil remarked. "Isn't it dreadfully desolate, Uncle Ned?"

"Yes; it is a wild and forbidding region, Phil," the colonel replied: "but there are other parts of the world quite as forbidding. An Arctic ice-pack, for instance."

"What is an ice-pack?" asked George.

"Let me tell you a story about it, and that will best explain," replied the colonel; and then he told the boys the following: —

An artist friend, in search of icebergs, beguiled me to take passage with him upon a fishing-vessel bound for the southern coast of Greenland.

We reached the coast of Labrador before we saw a cake of floating ice, and the artist began to groan; but the skipper, who thought much more of fish, was in high glee.

The first rough weather came with a dense fog and a north-east gale, driving us to shelter in a little bay. Three days we lay there; then the skipper's patience gave out, and with one jib and a reefed sail, we went flying out into the fog.

Before long we began bumping mercilessly against blocks of floating ice, in spite of two men at the prow.

The ice increased, and the vessel shook and trembled under the shocks; while the skipper's face, as he fell off a little before the wind, clearly indicated that he would gladly be back in the harbor.

It began to snow, and we could not see across the deck; but a sudden gust opened a rift in

the snow, and a shout from the lookout mingled with a cry of horror from every one on deck. We were driving dead into a mountain of floating ice, higher than the mast-head.

The helm went down, and we careened till the sail was under water; yet even then we slid, with a suggestive thump, over an arm of the iceberg stretching out under the water, and almost capsized.

"That was a close call," muttered the skipper; "but we'll have a closer before the day is done."

He was right. The wind began to come in savage gusts and veering flaws, lifting the snow here and there, only to reveal more and more a fearful reality. A solid mass of pack-ice was piling higher and higher between us and the distant coast. On the starboard side, a vast field of ice was bearing down upon us from the open sea. Behind us, the path by which we came was obliterated; and, dead ahead, several large icebergs circled with pack-ice could now and then be seen. Between them lay our only hope.

Braced against the mainmast the skipper stood, keeping his eyes everywhere. No time was to be lost, for the ice ahead was closing in. The vessel was brought about upon a tack that would barely make the opening, more sail was made, and we dashed forward like the wind.

The opening grew smaller and smaller, and the floating ice banged against our prow as we plunged forward. We entered the rift at the last moment, with an enormous iceberg on one side, and a mass of pack-ice rapidly drifting toward it, on the other.

In another moment we should have been in clear water beyond, when we caught upon a shoulder of the iceberg, slid almost out of the water, lost our headway and before we recovered from the shock found ourselves held like a wedge between the two masses.

"Out with the ice anchors!" shouted the captain. "Get her out of this in one minute or we are gone."

In an instant the ice anchors were fast, and the men working like demons on the ropes.

We moved forward, when suddenly the iceberg lurched to one side, dropping us into the water, and setting us free. The gale tugged fiercely at the sails, but the aft anchor on the pack-ice held, and we began to go over.

"Cut the aft line, or we'll swamp!" yelled the captain.

I stood nearest the rope, as it creaked and strained; and, catching an axe which had been used to set the anchor, I sprang upon the rail, and with one blow severed the taut line. The vessel bounded from the ice, righted, felt the sails, and plunged forward; while I lost my balance, fell from the rail and landed on my face, flat upon the ice.

When I gained my feet, the vessel was twenty rods away, plunging before a hurricane; and I was alone, off the bleak coast of Labrador, upon a mass of floating ice.

She could not return. It would have been death to all on board to attempt it. Spell-bound I stood there watching the retreating sail, when the snow ceased as quickly as it had

begun, and the setting sun transformed those masses of ice to mountains of rainbows. The dory had been forgotten in our sudden departure, and still bounded on behind. I saw it cut loose, and realized that a single figure, in the frail boat, was coming back to me; but in the excitement of the moment I did not give it a second thought. I was too intently watching the sail.

The ice was everywhere; floe after floe, creaking and groaning, was packing up in every direction, while the vessel dove and leaped and floundered on.

"Where is she going?" I muttered.

She tacked and tacked again, careening almost to the water as she filled away. I watched till, just as the last disk of the sun was sinking, I saw her make for what must have been a narrow rift between two giant icebergs.

I saw her enter and hesitate, as though she had lost the wind; and then, before my staring eyes, I saw the two great masses close upon each other with a crash that sounded like dis-

tant thunder. The last ray of the setting sun flashed like colored fire over one pyramid of crystal, in whose icy heart the good ship lay buried, with every soul on board.

My first instinctive act was to fall upon my knees and thank God that I was there, off the bleak coast of Labrador, upon a mass of floating ice and not on that doomed ship.

I was roused by the voice of the artist. The dory had been crushed under him, but he had made his way to me over the ice.

We held a council, while the ice heaved and groaned beneath us. Freezing, starving, drowning, stared us in the face. If we could gain the shore, we should be safer, at all events; but we must do it before the tide turned or the wind changed, breaking up the floe and sending it far out to sea.

It was a clear, cold night; and running, climbing, leaping, floating on cakes of ice, we made our way. The night was short; but with the gray light of morning, more dead than alive, we stood upon the shore.

Our trouble was by no means over; but we were sure of what was beneath us, at all events. When the sun shone, we found the warmest place we could, and slept. When it was too cold to sleep we plodded southward, living on ice and snow, knowing nothing of the coast, only watching for a sail or a sign of life; till, half-frozen and more than half-famished, we came, without warning, upon a miserable, dilapidated fishermen's settlement.

It seemed like reaching Paradise. The finest hotel in Europe or America has never afforded me such comfort as one of those wretched huts; and when a cup of coffee, not just what it might be, vexes me, I often recall the pleasure with which I drank the half-melted blubber provided by that Esquimau Indian.

"I think I'd rather hear you tell of it, Uncle Ned," remarked Phil, "than go through such an experience myself. I don't like so much ice. Ice-cream soda is about all I want of it, — or ice-water."

"Sometimes too much water is as perilous as too much ice," said the colonel; "as for instance."

I remember an adventure I had when I was on an American trader, bound for Manilla. We were in the Yellow Sea. The Yellow Sea is true to its name, being colored from the mud of the great Si River. It is open to every wind that blows, and to every current that runs, and is always uneasy.

The season was the worst of all the year; for it was just at the changing monsoons. The captain was a daring Yankee skipper; and, with every inch of sail which the schooner could carry, he drove her like the gale itself over the angry Yellow Sea.

Just before daylight, the men on the port side were thrown unceremoniously out of their bunks. There was a rush for the deck. The wind had shifted without warning. The schooner had suddenly keeled. Men were cutting away the mainmast, for she was capsizing.

Her bows were well under water before the strain was relieved, and she emerged, slowly, from the sea that had almost engulfed her.

She was a sorry-looking sight as she fell off before the gale, though the whole transformation was the work of less than ten minutes. What we saw, too, was far from the worst.

The captain's face was grave as he stood by the man at the wheel, watching the prow swinging a hundred feet to the lee at a sweep, then settling down into the dragging, seething foam, as though it had no energy to rise again.

The mate came aft, and the captain said: "Man both the pumps, and have the extra pumps ready. Set the carpenter to work if he can. Get the tarpaulings out, and report;" but he did not take his eyes from the prow.

There was something in that weather-beaten man that fascinated me, in spite of the storm, as he stood there, with fixed eyes and folded arms, solely responsible for the lives and cargo about him, master of a leaking and disabled vessel in the midst of a terrific gale. All was

hurry and confusion about him, but he did not heed it. There was no shadow of cowardice. He was calmly calculating the frail chances of life against the overwhelming probabilities of death.

The mate reported that the leak was out of reach, and that the water was coming in nearly eight hundred strokes an hour.

"The capacity of the pumps is a thousand strokes," replied the captain. "Keep them hard at it."

All day long the sailors worked at the pumps. The captain was everywhere; relieving an exhausted sailor; working at the ropes; watching the horizon for a sail; examining the water in the hold; always the same calm, quiet, bronzed face, without a trace of anxiety, even, except in his Yankee-blue eyes.

The water rose and rose, in spite of the tarpaulings, and in spite of the pumps. The leaks were increasing, and the gale did not abate.

All night long the work went on, and at daylight it was the worst of all. Old bronzed sail-

ors were fairly white ; strong men lay utterly exhausted upon the deck, rolling as the vessel labored in the heavy seas. Even the schooner seemed to have given up the struggle. She drove her bows sullenly into the waves, with no effort to rise above them. Only the captain was unchanged.

When it was fully light, the captain, naked to the waist, appeared among the men at the pumps. "Boys," said he, "the water is gaining on us. If the gale lets up, we may hold her till daylight to-morrow. If it keeps on, we shall go down with the sun. We are a hundred miles from shore, making four miles an hour. There are two boats left. Those who wish can take them now."

There was silence for a moment. Even the gale whipping through the rigging seemed to wait and listen as one poor, haggard fellow, who had fallen upon a coil of rope, staggered to his deserted post, exclaiming, —

"To the pumps, men ! For life and the captain ! Who dares desert the ship ?"

That was enough. The pumps worked away as they had not for twelve hours. The wind abated more and more. The tarpaulings caught; and two hours later came the cheering news that we were gaining on the water. Still, for more than twenty hours we worked.

I have seen the ship that carried me on fire; I have been cast upon the rocks at midnight, in a hurricane at the foot of the Red Sea; but I would rather go through both again, than repeat those two days and nights upon the Yellow Sea.

Not a sail appeared; but we sighted land at last, reached the harbor, and ran the schooner aground.

As boats started with the ropes for shore, and the sailors burst into a cry of joy, the Yankee skipper, who had kept hope and strength in us all, pressed his hand over his eyes for an instant, and then fell senseless to the deck.

"I should think he would have weakened under such a strain," commented George.



"The pumps worked as they had not for twelve hours."

"But weren't the sailors brave too?" said Phil; "and didn't you all feel relieved when you got out of danger?"

"We did, indeed," said Uncle Ned. "But then one always does that you know. I had something the same experience another time at Gibraltar."

"What was it? Tell it, Uncle Ned," cried both the boys. And the colonel gave them this story of adventure:—

The British [he said] held Gibraltar; but communication was cut off by a blockade. The British fleet was fifty miles away, preparing for an attack. Despatches must be sent to Gibraltar, and an answer brought back.

A large sum was offered for the work. My captain accepted. I was only a boy, but could row better than the best sailor; so he selected me to help.

We ran down within fifteen miles of Gibraltar, by eight o'clock, on the first dark night; then, in a little dory, we two started

to make that thirty miles before daylight the next morning, or to die in the attempt.

There was just enough of a breeze to deaden the sound of our oars. We went straight as a line for Gibraltar. Twice we passed directly under the nose of a big ship, but no one thought of looking for a bit of a cork with two men in it.

We were at the wharf but seventeen minutes, and spent the time in drinking coffee and running up and down. At eight minutes before eleven, just two hours and fifty-two minutes from the start, we dipped our oars to return.

All that had favored our getting in was against our getting out again. Even the wind had risen, and the sea with it. There was a storm coming up; and, even if we could keep the dory afloat, the lightning, before long, would show us up.

The captain sat in the prow, with the compass in his lap. It was only opened a hair's breadth, to hide the light; and he was at

the same time pushing on his oars that he might keep a lookout for the enemy's ships.

Three times we dodged them; and once a voice hailed us in the darkness, but we could not understand what was said, and did not stop.

I had rowed over those waves, that were rising higher and higher, till I was ready to drop the oars and let the dory go where it would. The captain looked at his watch by the compass light, and reported half-past one.

I groaned as I replied that I must take a rest or I could never pull through the remaining hour.

Just at that moment there was a blinding flash of lightning.

The captain and I both uttered an exclamation of dismay.

There was a big ship not a hundred feet away on one side; and on the other side a boat with half a dozen men in it!

Three more flashes followed in quick succession. They had sighted us, and were bearing down upon us with sail and oar.

"If the lightning holds up, they may lose us," whispered the captain. "There are the despatches, wrapped in lead. Throw them overboard before you give up. Pull for all you're worth, now; and, if there's another flash, I'll give them a broadside from this rifle."

I ground my teeth. The oars bent and the rowlocks creaked.

Hark! a voice! "Captain Beer, ahoy!"

The rifle dropped. My oars flew out of the water.

It was the voice of our second officer. Fearing the weather would be too much for us, our people had taken our points and run six miles nearer. It was a dangerous risk; but so well had we both of us kept our lines, through that darkness and storm, that we came within a hundred feet of colliding.

"Whew! but that must have been a relief!" cried Phil; and George, all excitement, echoed the "Whew!" with satisfaction.

CHAPTER III.

A TIGER, A DRAGON, A PIRATE, AND A KID-
NAPPER.

ONCE again Phil and George were in the colonel's library ; and once again they besieged him for stories.

"Have you ever had any adventures with wild animals, Uncle Ned?" asked George.

"Yes," replied the colonel, "I have had several such ; but never one that is a more vivid memory than the day I felt the tiger's breath."

"My, though, but that sounds interesting!" cried Phil. "How was it, Uncle Ned?"

And, as ready to tell as were the boys to listen, the colonel gave them the story:—

The natives of India [he said] have a prov-

erb that one is never a safe hunter until he has felt a tiger's breath.

I was young in India. I had ventured upon a few tiger hunts, but with fear and trembling.

It was an autumn afternoon, nearing night. With a friend, who was an old hunter, I was making a journey through the forests, below the Himalayas, just above the Terai.

We were mounted on elephants. Conversation was difficult, and I was half asleep in my howdah when roused by a shout from my friend. At the same moment my elephant made an ungainly lurch that almost upset me, and a large tiger came gliding through the air, landing upon the elephant's haunch, his great claws buried deep in the tough hide.

All this in an instant. I confess I was thoroughly bewildered, if not thoroughly frightened.

"Steady, my boy!" cried my friend. "He'll stop there for an instant, and then climb up. Kill him, or you're gone!"

This was consoling; and, with scarcely strength to hold my rifle at all, I fired. He responded with a terrific yelp.

The elephant suddenly swung himself about.

It was a trick of his trade to dislodge a wounded tiger, and prevent his doing mischief. It served the purpose well. The tiger went rolling over in the grass. I was not used to that mode of warfare, however, and came as near as the very edge of the howdah to following him.

I sprang to my feet. So did the tiger; and at the same instant made another leap for the elephant, to land as before.

I caught up my second rifle, and rested it upon the edge of the howdah.

"Give it to him!" shouted my friend. I heard him, but was absolutely unable to pull the trigger.

Inch by inch the tiger drew himself upward, while the elephant shrieked, and ran so fast that my friend could not overtake me.

I stood there, utterly helpless, looking down

at that blood-red tongue, dripping and foaming ; at the savage teeth, glistening and white ; into that purple gullet, out of which the breath came wheezing and grating.¹

At last an advancing paw rested on the base of the howdah. I heard my friend calling, and realized my danger ; but I was literally benumbed, and could not move.

I am sure that I should have stood there and let him do as he would with me, but for an act of folly on his part, which saved my life.

The muzzle of my rifle was in his way. He caught it in his angry jaws. In the start which it gave me, my fingers instinctively clutched, and the one resting on the trigger could not help pulling it. The ball went crashing through the tiger's brain.

Many a time I have faced a tiger, at close quarters, since then ; but never again did I feel a sentiment of fear, beyond precaution and self-preservation. I cannot account for it, but many a hunter has experienced the same.

¹ See frontispiece.

This time it was Phil's breath that came quick with excitement: "Gracious, though! what a narrow escape!" he said.

"Wasn't it?" echoed George; and their uncle added with a laugh, "Well, it was close enough; and yet, serious as it was, it somehow made me think of my boy, 'Run-for-your-life,' and the dragon of the China Sea."

"A dragon! I thought there were no such animals," exclaimed Phil.

"Well, this seemed a very real one for 'Run-for-your-life,' even though he could not see it."

And, smiling at their collection of the adventure, the colonel told the boys this story:—

Scarce a Chinese junk ever sails the sea without more or less of a dragon for its figure-head. Sometimes it is only a block of wood, but it is a dragon all the same. And every dragon has at least one eye. It takes a rogue to catch a rogue; and the cause of these figure-head dragons is a firm belief in a real, live dragon, that lurks deep down in the China Sea.

The greater part of Chinese theology and philosophy is made up of dragons. There are dragons in everything; and a Chinaman's life is chiefly spent in either conciliating or frightening dragons, or guarding against them.

I was crossing the China Sea with my native servant, pig-tailed Taosen. The name means, "Run-for-life," and Taosen lived up to it.

He was very much opposed to the vessel I selected, because it had no dragon at the prow, and no eye.

"No got eye, how can see? No can see, how go sailee? Me no likee!" he muttered.

Then, as ill-luck would have it, a roaring storm set in.

Taosen knew all about it; he was certain that it would be the end of us; and aside from all dragons and philosophy, it did seem more than probable that he was correct.

If he had been out of my reach, and beyond the danger of interruption, he would have beat gongs, rattled pans, fired crackers—anything to make a noise. He would have wailed and

howled to try to frighten the dragon, who was rolling about beneath us. If that did not work, he would have killed a white rooster, if he could have found one, sprinkled its blood on the water, and nailed its head and some of its feathers to the mast. Many a storm-beaten junk comes into port with that talisman conspicuously displayed. Next he would have thrown rice into the sea, thinking the dragon might be hungry. After that, he would have tried a little wine, to see if he were thirsty. Then he would have tried to frighten him again, and kept it up till the junk went down under him — when, if he lived, he would have said that the dragon was too angry to be appeased — or until the storm abated, when he would have had stronger faith than ever in the grand Chinese system of philosophy and theology.

Taosén knew very well that for any such antics he would have his pig-tail smartly pulled, be shaken out of his thick-soled shoes, or dumped into a tub of water by some of the Eng-

lish sailors; and his fear of the angry dragon was not so intense as his desire to keep himself and his cue out of the tub.

Something must be done, however; for, though he was Taosen, he could not run for his life when there was no place to run to; and he proceeded to do the most inoffensive thing possible to appease the dragon: that is, to burn "joss-papers."

Joss means "a god" or dragon — any god and every god that the Chinese recognize; and joss-papers are little sheets of paper so prepared as to ignite easily and burn quickly. Sometimes they are plain prepared tissue paper. Sometimes they are gilt and silver sheets, covered with a wash of powder to help them burn. Some have pictures of special dragons for which they are intended, and some are all covered with printed prayers.

Taosen had no very fine joss-papers; for he was a poor boy, and could not afford them. Such as he had, however, he burned; but the cranky dragon down below was apparently not

satisfied, for the wind roared, and the sea rolled more fiercely than ever.

My dog Tag was with me. Tag was always with me. He was not a handsome dog, but I loved him and he loved me. He was never with Taosen, for he and Taosen never got on very well together; so when I missed Tag, the last place I thought of looking for him was where Taosen and a Celestial friend were burning joss-papers out upon the deck. Tag must be found, however; and at last I found him. Taosen was on one side, burning joss-papers; his friend was on the other, burning joss-papers; and in the middle was Tag, howling in shrillest falsetto, as if to sing down the storm.

He was a real Chinese dog, that little Tag of mine; and though he hated Taosen, and Taosen hated him, the storm had reached a point where something must be done, and they had joined forces. They proved too much for the dragon of the China Sea. He subsided as quickly as possible; but the exigencies of that hour left Tag and Taosen ever the very best of friends.

The boys laughed heartily over the dragon story, and George inquired, —

“Aren't they funny crafts, those Chinese junks, Uncle Ned?”

“Funny? yes,” replied the colonel. “And yet not so very funny if one of them happens to be a pirate and after you.”

“Why, were you ever in such a fix?” Phil demanded.

“Worse yet,” said his uncle. “I've been the fellow on board the pirate junk, and been chased by a man-of-war.”

“Oh, grand!” cried George; and “tell us about it,” said Phil.

Which the colonel did, as follows:—

It was a beautiful moonlight night on the great Blue River. A reckless adventure at Nankin had left me in a box; a veritable box indeed, for it was well fastened on all sides, and stood upon the deck of a Chinese junk, manned by pirates, and dashing under full sail down the Blue River.

My native servant, Master Taosen, had disappeared when I got into trouble, as what Chinese servant would not? I had not seen him since. Indeed, I had not seen anything but a ray of moonlight coming through a crack in my box.

Suddenly a sail dropped; and from what was said, I inferred that we had overhauled a silk junk and proposed to "take her in."

A little later a wild yell arose, at no great distance; then there was shouting and clashing, and an occasional report of some uncertain firearms, marking the progress of the work. Then all was still, and the deed was evidently done.

The work of hoisting the sails began, but the large sail would not move. They tried the smaller sail. The rope broke in the upper rigging. The captain was furious. Men were sent aloft, where I judged, from what I heard, that they found things strangely tangled.

It was half an hour before they again

began to hoist the large sail, just as a mandarin junk appeared in the distance.

There was almost a gale blowing down the river; and as the great sail filled, I could feel the strain as the junk started. Then there was a sudden lurch. The ropes which held the lower corners parted, and the great sail floated like flag.

It was growing interesting. Evidently the mandarin junk was bearing down upon us rapidly. I struggled to see something through the crack, but could only obtain a view of the man at the helm, holding the long wooden arm with which the rudder of a junk is turned.

The moon shone full upon his face. I started, stared, shut my eyes for an instant, then looked again. He was bare to the waist, with a rough, bagging skirt, held by a rope girdle. The disguise was complete; but the face! Could I mistake it? As sure as fate, it was my servant, Master Taosen.

How came he there? Was it through his



"I could only see the man at the helm."

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treachery that I was in the box, or through his loyalty that the rigging was demoralized? He seemed to understand his business at that helm.

The mandarin junk was within hailing distance when the last rope was repaired.

I heard her captain order us to stop. I heard our captain laugh as the sail began to draw and he replied that he was in haste.

The junk quickly responded to the sail, and began to move; then Taosen grasped the helm arm, braced his bare feet, and back, back, back, carried it to the rail, over it, and, leaning out over the water, stood tugging with might and main, his feet braced against the stern.

The junk yielded, swung about, and lost both wind and current before the captain realized what had happened, and sprang for the helm.

Taosen dropped it, and, with a yell, went head-first into the water. His work was done. I could not see, but I could hear, as the Gov-

ernment soldiers boarded the junk and carried on the usual work with pirates — death without quarter.

When the noise subsided, there was a thump on the side of my prison-box, and the voice of that blessed Master Taosen sounded, speaking in pigeon English, which he was very fond of using when addressing me.

“All lightee you, master? you no die? Gottee fuslate lifee. Maskee! My talkee Taosen, you welly luck boy. Evlybody lookkee fightee. My go workee evlywhere. All mickis up. Sail he no go up, no come down. All lightee now. Come on.”

“What a funny fellow he must have been — that Taosen,” said Phil, laughing over the Chinaman’s escapade and pigeon English. “Good fellow too.”

“Yes; better than the coolie to whom I once trusted myself in China,” remarked the colonel. “By the way, it was just after the pirate adventure. Want to hear it?”

"Oh, don't we, though!" exclaimed the boys; and the colonel proceeded to tell them of this adventure at the tomb of the Mings:—

The mandarin junk upon which I was sailing down the Blue River of China lay, for the day, at the wharf of Nankin.

I left it early for an inspection of the ancient capital. In the afternoon I took the common wheelbarrow conveyance, to visit the tombs of the Mings. The coolie who trundled it said he could take me there and back by sundown.

A thunderstorm delayed us; and the sun went down while we were among the hills, two miles, at least, from the city.

The coolie insisted upon my stopping at one more ruin, in a grove just off the road. It was so dark that I could not have seen it at the best, and I told him to hurry back to the city. It is hard, however, to convince a Chinese coolie of anything; and I was not surprised when he turned deliberately toward the ruin.

It was almost dark in the grove; and as we approached the indistinct masses of masonry they gave me a very strong suggestion of all sorts of ghosts and goblins.

Suddenly the coolie began to run. If he had been going the other way, I should have thought he was frightened. Before I had time to think, however, the barrow was tipped sharply to one side, and I was floundering in the tangled undergrowth.

As I sprang to my feet, every rock and shrub about me seemed alive.

Out of the very ground men seemed to rise. I thought there were at least a hundred. Probably a dozen would be nearer right.

It would have been folly to struggle; yet I was upon the point of at least entering a vigorous protest, when my arms were uncere-
moniously caught in a noose and securely bound, my feet were tied, a cloth was bound over my face, and I was laid upon my back in some sort of a box.

It was all done so quickly, that when it

was over I could still feel upon my hands the imprint of the branch which I had caught when falling out of the wheelbarrow.

Not a word had been spoken; but I knew by the motion that I must be in some sort of a palanquin, and was being carried somewhere. I wondered where.

The air was stifling. It was rank with opium. Some of the fellows must have been smoking there while waiting for me.

Between the cloth over my face and the opium fumes, which were all the air I could secure, I was suffocating. I shouted, but it did no good; the steady, silent swing kept on. Evidently the fellows knew what they were doing, but did not propose to tell me.

The scene changed, and changed again, and yet it did not change at all. A thousand different things seemed going on about me; then there was nothing at all going on, and I was very comfortable and very sleepy.

I shut my eyes for a short nap. When I opened them again I was in bed in my gaudy

little stateroom upon the mandarin junk, miles away from Nankin, on the great Blue River.

How came I there? Two men had brought me down to the wharf in a palanquin.

They said they came from an opium den; and the officers of my escort, thinking I had yielded to a very popular weakness among themselves, paid the fellows well for having saved them the necessity of hunting me up.

My watch was gone; so were my money, my pocket-knife, my handkerchief even. Everything I had about me that could be of service even to a Chinaman had disappeared.

They had put me to sleep by burning an opium rope in that closed palanquin.

It was the gentlest, most complete and courteous highway robbery that I ever heard of.

CHAPTER IV.

A PREFECT, A MULE, AND A ROGUE ELEPHANT.

THE visit of the boys at their uncle's house was nearly over. But their desire for stories was by no means satisfied. It did seem, they declared, as if no one had ever had so many wonderful adventures as Uncle Ned.

The day before they left his house, Phil and George invaded the library and begged for just a few more stories; and the colonel, nothing loath to please the boys, complied.

"I was telling you about Chinese pirates and robbers, the other day," he said. "Here is a story about a Chinese official, with whom I had some dealings. It will give you a good idea of the Chinese character, when positions of power afford opportunity for injustice." And the col-

onel gave the boys this story of how he overcame a Chinese prefect or high magistrate : —

I was once, upon official business, crossing the south of China under Government escort. This demanded that the prefects of the various places where I stopped should provide food and lodging as they were required. Some were overzealous in their hospitality. One fellow, however, proposed to have me spend the night at the public tavern of his town.

The name of the inn was "Celestial Happiness." The oily landlord bowed me up to the state chamber. It was directly over the kitchen, so that it should always be warm. It had one window of oiled paper, covered with dust. The heat was insufferable; and with it, through great cracks in the floor, visible effects of frying came up from the kitchen below. Small lodgers moved fearlessly over the walls and floor. Mosquitoes began a grand concert the moment I entered.

"Who sent me here?" I demanded.

"The prefect," with a very low bow.

"Does he expect me to stay here?"

"How can I tell? I am not the prefect; but you shall be made perfectly happy."

I reached the door before the bearers and escort had left; and, entering the palanquin, ordered a quick move to the prefect's residence.

He was enjoying a quiet smoke, and a cup of hot wine and melon seeds with a few friends, when I was announced.

He intended to take from the treasury the amount allowed for entertaining official travellers, and, less what little the inn-keeper charged, to put it into his own pocket.

I knew that he would send me word that he was not in; so I entered the gate the moment the servant opened it, and followed him as far as the pavilion, just outside the room where the prefect was sitting with his friends.

"Foolish fellow!" he exclaimed to the servant. The Chinaman always shouts when he is excited. "Why did you not say I was not at home?"

"I did," the poor fellow pleaded; "but he walked across the court, sat down in the pavilion, and told me to bring him some tea while he waited for you."

"Go again! Tell him I am out of town!"

"How can he believe it, when he has heard you speak?" asked one of the guests.

The next moment the portly prefect stood in the pavilion, greeting me with all the politeness written in the great Book of Rites. He thanked me for the honor of the call, hoped my quarters at the inn would be very comfortable, promised to call in the morning, and wished me good-night.

I ventured to suggest that the inn was not fit for a dog, and that I did not propose to stop there. He seemed greatly disturbed, and assured me that, as it was late, if I would try and put up with the discomfort for the night, he would see that I was sent to another inn in the morning.

I don't believe there was another tavern in the town; and the rascal knew I was going on in the morning.

I was not very sure of my ground, but I determined upon a bold stroke. I quietly informed him that, in reality, I had come, bag and baggage, to spend the night with him ; and, that as I was hungry, I should be pleased to have supper served at once.

I do not know what he might not have done, but fortunately he took it as a good joke upon himself. He smiled, and invited me into the room where his guests were enjoying life. Hot water and towels were produced. Tea followed, and shortly a very acceptable supper was smoking on a low table before me ; beginning with sweetmeats, as usual, and ending with soup.

The experiment succeeded ; but I should be very reluctant to try it many times in such a doubtful locality as the Celestial Kingdom.

“That was a joke on the Chinaman, wasn’t it though ?” laughed Phil.

“You regularly turned the tables on him, Uncle Ned,” said George.

“Yes,” replied his uncle, “I rather think I

did. I came very nearly to being a match for Calderwood's mule."

"What was Calderwood's mule?" queried George.

"A white mule that nearly got me cornered by Bedouins once, on the shores of the Dead Sea," the colonel replied.

"Oh, that sounds fine!" exclaimed George. "Tell us the story, Uncle Ned." And the colonel did, as follows:—

One midnight we left the hovels of Jericho behind us for a canter of twelve miles over the Syrian desert, to the shores of the Dead Sea.

We were on our way to Persia, and as neither of us had seen the famous salt lake, we devoted one night to it, in passing Jericho; though it was quite out of the season when travellers wander about Syria, and quite in the season when Bedouins are to be found encamped on the shores of the Dead Sea, making salt for the coming year.

Calderwood was mounted upon his great

white mule; I upon my black mare. We were accompanied by two Syrian guides, and an imitation Turkish soldier, in deference to the law obliging us to have a military escort.

Leaving the plateau, upon which both old and new Jericho were built, we crept down the steep hill, through the olive grove, and cantered out upon the broad ocean of sand that sinks gradually toward the Dead Sea, so much lower than the Mediterranean.

It was a series of low sand-hills; and as we approached the sea from the summits of the great drifts, we could see fires burning upon our right, where the Bedouins were making salt upon the shore.

Our brave Turkish soldier showed signs of the better part of valor, and the guides were far from anxious to meet the salt-makers from beyond the Jordan. They assured us that the Dead Sea was nothing to see, after all, and suggested turning back.

Calderwood bluntly declined their advice; but the fellows deliberately fell behind, and

the last quarter of a mile we two rode on alone.

Calderwood was a royal good fellow. I do not think he ever knew what fear meant. As soon as we reached the water, he dismounted and began undressing for a bath.

My horse was not so sure to remain where she was left as the mule; so I still sat in the saddle, waiting for the guides to come and hold her, when suddenly there was a flash of fire-arms, followed by a sharp report, and a hubbub of voices, above which rang the frantic yell of our Turkish soldier: "Run for your lives! Run for your lives!"

A moment later, there was the sound of a multitude of feet running over the sand; and the jumble of voices showed that the Bedouins knew our position, and were rapidly approaching us.

"They sound like too many for us in the dark; I suppose we shall have to move on," said Calderwood; and, catching his coat from the sand, he made for the white mule. In at-

tempting to mount, he broke the stirrup strap close to the saddle, and fell heavily upon his back.

Quickly dismounting, I caught the saddle and held it while Calderwood clambered up on the other side. He was a poor horseman at the best, however, and once mounted, sat helplessly clinging to the broad, flat saddle of the Syrian mule.

The Bedouins were close upon us, and the white mule was constitutionally slow to take a gentle hint. Something must start the creature instantly; and catching up the broken stirrup by the strap, I swung it round my head and brought the heavy foot-piece down with a bang upon the white haunch. Just in time, I dodged a pair of hoofs as they flew into the air, and gaining my equilibrium, had the satisfaction of seeing the white shadow disappearing in the darkness toward Jericho.

Turning quickly to my own horse, I was about to mount, when a volley was fired by the approaching Bedouins; and the animal fell floundering in the sand.

Here was a decided predicament. The East Jordan Bedouins are the most unscrupulous robbers of the desert; and to defend myself against no one knew how many of them, I had only my small revolver.

The shots were fired from less than fifty feet away, and aiming as well as I could in the total darkness, I fired three times in quick succession.

There was an unearthly yell, followed by a dead silence. For a moment, at least, they were waiting. In that moment my horse struggled to her feet, and seeing that at least she was not dead, I thrust my revolver into my belt, sprang into the saddle, and drove the spurs into the black sides beneath me, determined to make the most of whatever life remained.

She started up the sand-hill like the wind; and for the first time, I noticed that I still held Calderwood's stirrup in my hand. I was in the act of throwing it away, when I suddenly came upon the white mule, standing stock still, with Calderwood still clinging to the big saddle.

"Go on!" I whispered eagerly.

"Can't," muttered Calderwood.

"Why not?" I asked.

"This everlasting ghost won't stir a step either way," he replied.

"We'll see," I whispered, thanking fortune that I still had the stirrup. Again it flew round my head, and came down with a whack on the mule, at the very instant that we again heard that ominous rattle in the sand, close behind us.

Yes; he moved. He moved so decidedly, that he threw Calderwood clear off the saddle; but my friend, still clung on the creature's neck, and worked his way back again, as we flew over the sand.

Close behind, I followed the white mule, constantly encouraging him with blows from the stirrup, till we reached the steep hill that brought us to the open plain of Jericho.

On the way, I realized that something was very wrong with my left leg; but it was not till we were safe in the tent that I discovered seventeen large shot, buried in the flesh, between

my knee and ankle. Fortunately, I wore high boots; and the heavy leather prevented the shot from going deep enough to do any great damage.

My mare, too, was more frightened than hurt; for examination showed only a slight flesh wound, just behind the saddle. Her lower lip, however, was terribly swollen and bleeding. I could not account for it, till Calderwood explained that every time I struck the mule, the creature kicked, and my poor horse must have borne the brunt of it.

When all was over, and with bandages and lotions we were nearly as comfortable as possible, we had a good laugh over our adventure; but we quietly resolved not to try the Dead Sea again at that season, unless we went prepared for it.

“Well, that was rough on the horse, wasn’t it?” said Phil; “why is it that a mule is so stubborn just at the wrong time?”

“Other animals besides mules are, Phil,”

laughed his uncle. "I have even known some men almost as obstinate. Now take, for example, the superstitious man. He is always obstinate. I remember, when I wasn't much older than you boys, an adventure in which the obstinacy of superstition was the death of a raft-full of men, and almost cut off my brief career. It was the time I was treed by a rogue elephant. But I have told you that, haven't I?"

"Treed by an elephant? Oh, no, no! you haven't," cried both boys. "Do tell us, please."

"Well, this is the last," the colonel said. "It's time you boys were abed, if you expect to get up in time for your train to-morrow."

And he ended his list of stories with this: —

Years ago, when scarcely more than a boy, I was drifting down the great river of Ceylon, upon a raft guided by a dozen natives.

The forests of the interior of Ceylon are wonderful. The sluggish rivers meandering through them have to fight for a place for

themselves. The trees absolutely grow out into the water.

I was not in a state, however, to admire the beauties of that trip, for I had met with an accident that prevented my going on with a party that was penetrating the forest. I was being sent back to the coast, and was stretched out upon that raft, as the easiest and safest conveyance homeward.

My immediate servant, nurse, and protector, was a great, stalwart African — a Zedee, named Mobarak. With the other natives, I had very little to do, for Mobarak would not let one of them come near me.

Nothing would induce those superstitious boatmen to move an inch after dark. They would go on shore and prepare the supper; then they would push out into the stream, moor the raft, and go to sleep.

The most eventful night of this trip, and the one that I remember best, was a perfect one. I could not sleep; but lay watching the full moon, as it rose slowly out of the black jungle, and

sent a line of silver across the dark water, till it seemed to touch the raft.

The tropical forest is full of noises at night ; but the native is accustomed to them, and sleeps soundly. I could distinguish the heavy breathing of every man about me, when suddenly a shrill note sounded, far away in the opposite forest.

I knew that it was made by an elephant ; and soon I heard the branches crackling, and the cry repeated, as the ponderous body approached the stream. A moment later, a huge, dusky form was just visible in the moonlight, between the trees ; its fore-feet were in the water, its trunk erect ; the beast was evidently in a state of great excitement.

I did not then know as much about elephants as I did before I had got through with them ; but, supposing this one had simply come down to the water to drink, I lay watching the monster with the same curiosity with which I had watched animals at a menagerie.

The big fellow evidently saw the raft, for he

tore up a young tree by the roots, waved it over his head, and stepped farther into the water, facing directly toward us.

Being a little doubtful as to what he might intend, I poked Mobarak, who slept beside my mat. Fortunately the huge African opened his sleepy eyes directly upon the approaching elephant.

He was a devout Mohammedan; and as the name of Allah escaped his lips, he sprang to his feet, caught me in his arms, leaped into the water, which was not above his shoulders, and with bound after bound gained the shore. He ran to a large tree with spreading branches, and pushing me up toward them as far as he could, he said eagerly, —

“Hold on there, master, till I climb and help you.”

“It is only an elephant,” I said in some disgust, as well as bodily pain caused by the sudden flight.

“A rogue elephant!” muttered Mobarak.

“What’s a rogue elephant?” I asked.

"He was captured once, and has escaped; or else he's been driven away from his mate."

"Well, what of it; what harm would he do?" I asked? but, before Mobarak could answer, I knew. There was a crashing and splashing in the water; cry after cry came from the boatmen; while from our outlook we could clearly distinguish the furious animal, lashing the water into foam with his trunk, catching one after another of the boatmen as they struggled to escape him, lifting them as high in the air as he could, and dashing them down into the water again.

Mobarak sat upon the limb beside me, watching the frightful scene with a broad smile upon his black face. His white teeth glistened in the moonlight.

"They are all killed," I exclaimed. "Why did you not wake them up?"

"It was written in their foreheads that they should die. It was not on ours."

"If we had remained there, we should be dead," I replied.

"But we did not remain," said Mobarak, with a philosophy so simple, but so profound, that it is even yet baffling the whole world to understand it.

The elephant kept at his work till the last vestige of the raft and the last boatman had disappeared. Then he came slowly out of the water, sniffed the air, looked about him, shook himself, and came straight to the tree where we were hiding.

Several times he walked about it; then he placed his forehead against the trunk, and began to push. It was a large, strong tree, but it shook and trembled while he pushed; and only the contented grin which still lingered on Mobarak's face kept me from being thoroughly frightened.

The elephant gave up in time; but it was growing light before he wandered off into the forest, and left us to hail a passing boat.

It was an absurd thing to think of, but all that night I kept recalling a conundrum given to me once by a schoolmate: "Why is an

elephant like a wheelbarrow?" And the answer was: "Because neither of them can climb a tree."

"And now climb to bed, boys," said the colonel; "and don't wake up to see rogue elephants, either. Good-night. You are excellent listeners, and I like to tell stories to boys who know how to listen."

"As if anyone couldn't listen to your stories, Uncle Ned," exclaimed George. "Why, I could listen to them all night; couldn't you, Phil?"

Phil enthusiastically answered that he could. And I really think that the boys were right; for the colonel's adventures were certainly very attractive.





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